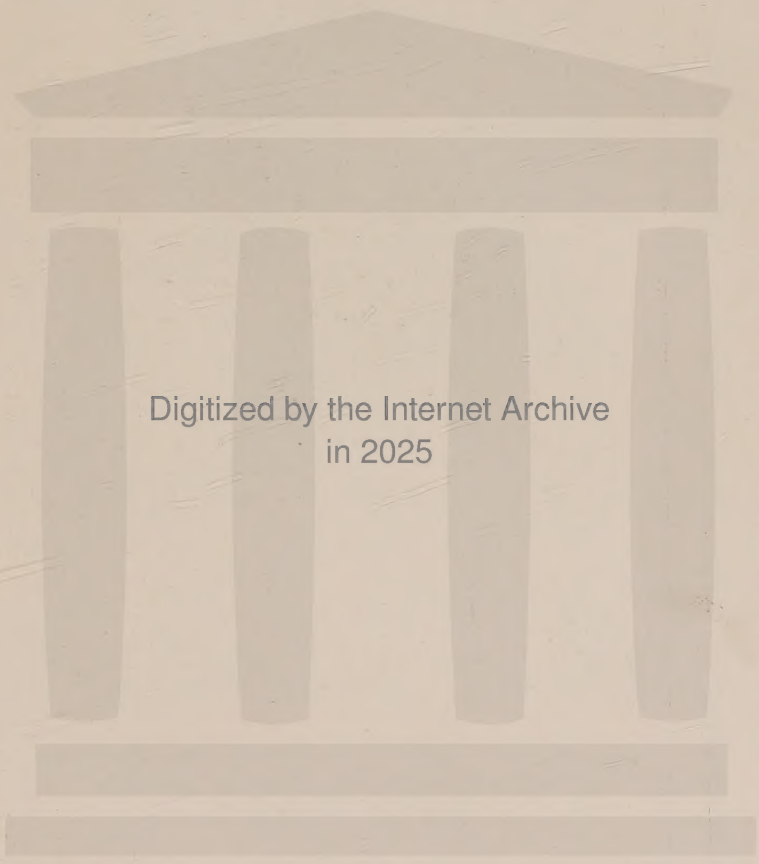
The *Incredible* MARQUIS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MONTE CRISTO

*During the years of the great romances Dumas was the uncrowned king of Paris*

# THE INCREDIBLE MARQUIS

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

by

HERBERT GORMAN

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FOR

JEAN WRIGHT GORMAN

*Sometimes the thought of you becomes*
*the bright flash of a lunging sword,*
*the sudden roll of battle drums,*
*a pealing trumpet's high accord;*

*and then my world is but a scene*
*where I am something more than man,*
*d'Artagnan riding for the Queen*
*or Bussy dying for Diane.*

# PREFACE

In approaching Alexandre Dumas *père* one approaches a mountain. It rises from the fair plains of French letters, shaggy, undisciplined, less imposing for its height than for its wide base, and curiously difficult to explore. Indeed, it would take the better part of a lifetime to follow all its trails, ferret out all its secret caverns, and elucidate all its incomprehensible excrescences. Yet some idea of its general shape and orientation is possible if the major paths be traced. The following chapters do not pretend to be exhaustive, for to present an exhaustive portrait of Dumas would mean a work that ran to several fat volumes. If all his devious days were traced, if all his books were analyzed, if all his love affairs were considered, if all his lawsuits were set forth in detail, if all his peregrinations through France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Spain, and Africa were meticulously followed, if all his quarrels were described, if all the stories and slanders and gossip that sprang up in illimitable mushroom growths wherever he went were detailed, the resultant work would resemble Behemoth among biographies. Since that is impossible I have selected, expanding those portions of his career that seemed most revelatory to me and telescoping those portions that were repetitions. First of all, I have striven for readableness. It was the man's life that I was writing and not a critical study of his work; therefore his plays and novels are considered only in relation to his career, such critical attention as has been included being there only to realize and clarify the mind of Dumas and its divagations.

The authorities for such an attempt are endless and often conflicting. There is the autobiographical material put forth by Dumas himself, *Mes Mémoires,* the *Impressions de Voyage,* and the long series of chatty *causeries* in which the author wrote about himself. Students of Dumas will observe that the first half of this book is founded rather closely on *Mes Mémoires,* checked up wherever possible, for Dumas's memory was, to put it politely, rather scatterbrained. I believe there is justifi-

cation for introducing so much from *Mes Mémoires,* because, though they have been translated in English, no wide circulation was ever attained by them in English-reading countries. I can do no more than indicate the more important sources, besides Dumas himself, that I have depended upon in writing this book. They are, of course, French, and include: *Alexandre Dumas, sa vie, son temps, son œuvre,* by H. Blaze de Bury; *Alexandre Dumas et son œuvre,* by Charles Glinel; *Le drame d'Alexandre Dumas,* and *Alexandre Dumas père,* by Hippolyte Parigot; *Les dernières années d'Alexandre Dumas,* by Gabriel Ferry; *Alexandre Dumas à la Maison d'Or,* by Philibert Audebrand; *Alexandre Dumas,* by Jules Janin; *Alexandre Dumas en manches de chemise,* by Benjamin Pifteau; *Le soleil Alexandre Dumas,* by Madame Clémence Badère. Besides these books I have used the memoirs and journals of Amaury Duval, Villemessant, Théodore de Banville, Maxime du Camp, the brothers Goncourt, Fontaney, Hostein, Arsène Houssaye, the Comtesse Dash, Madame Mennessier-Nodier, Madame Mathilde Shaw, and Charles Séchan. And this is but a portion of the material I turned over, for it was necessary to follow the history of Romanticism through a series of books, to refer to articles in old magazines and newspapers, and to investigate the political and social history of France from 1800 to 1870. To pedantically indicate every source from which I extracted some stray fact, then, would call for a rather long chapter in itself. Naturally, I do not expect this work to be without flaws. There are too many conflicting authorities, too many clashing dates, too many personal attitudes. The literature in English about Dumas is limited, and based, for the most part, on French data. Among the works that might be indicated are: *Alexandre Dumas: His Life and Works,* by Arthur F. Davidson; *The Life and Writings of Alexandre Dumas,* by Harry A. Spurr; *The Life and Adventures of Alexandre Dumas,* by Percy Fitzgerald; and essays by Thackeray, Andrew Lang, Abraham Hayward, Robert Louis Stevenson, Professor Dowden, W. E. Henley, W. H. Pollock, and R. S. Garnett. Every complete literary history of France, of course, contains some references to Dumas.

It is a pleasure to set down the names of friends, acquaintances, and kindly strangers who have assisted me with advice and books: Robert Aron, Lewis Galantière, Sylvia Beach, Ford Madox Ford, Carl Van

Doren, Gamaliel Bradford, R. S. Garnett, William Aspenwall Bradley, Coburn Gilman, Alfred Goldsmith, and Conrad Ormonde. Other names have probably slipped my mind.

Above all, I am grateful to my wife, Jean Wright Gorman, who has been tireless in aid, typing the entire script and catching many errors while performing this laborious task.

HERBERT GORMAN.

*April 1, 1929.*
*New York City.*

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# PART ONE

# D'ARTAGNAN

# CHAPTER ONE

## TRUMPETS AND THE BLACK DEVIL

### I

For three days troops passed through the quiet little village of Villers-Cotterets, surrounded by its miles of green forest, on their way to Soissons, Laon, and Mézières. They were gaitered giants, legendary creatures with fierce mustaches and faces browned by the burning suns of a dozen campaigns. They tramped steadily to the thunder of tambours and the shrill challenge of trumpets, bearing high above their cockades the riddled standards of Austerlitz, Wagram, and Moskova in their cylindrical-shaped cases. The regimental bands played *"Veillons au salut de l'empire."* Brigade after brigade passed. Rumbling ammunition wagons. Creaking caissons. The elephant-colored snouts of dusty cannon. Horses with proud tossing heads, braided tails, and sweating flanks. Clattering supply carts. Swaying shakos and fluttering sword sashes. Long jingling troops of cavalry, the men sitting easily in their heavy saddles, their sabers clashing against their spurs. Unending serpents of infantry crawling along the ocher road, the flash of their bayonets like a long stripe of silver. Dark-visaged Mamelukes in red baggy breeches and carrying swords shaped like crescents. Cuirassiers. Cannoneers. Hussars. Dragoons. The yellow dust of the road rose like a sulphurous smoke about the shaggy hoofs of the artillery horses, the slim legs of the cavalry chargers, and the stocky calves of the infantry. In less than seventy-two hours more than thirty thousand men, guiding horses, wagons, and guns, passed through Villers-Cotterets.

These men were sober-faced, almost gloomy in their attitudes. They did not smile or chant to the music of the regimental bands. It is possible that they suspected the future, that they understood that they were the last desperate cast of the pale-faced gambler who followed

them so slowly in his rumbling coach. They were tired. Their legs were weary with climbing the Alps, with crossing the plains of Austria and Lombardy, with plowing through the Saharan sands of Egypt and the glittering snowdrifts along the road to Smolensk. Every man was an Atlas. Upon his back he carried the Empire. It was time to lay down this monstrous burden. Twilight flowed over these marching columns and they pushed forward doggedly. Blue night descended, and they dropped their packs, hobbled their horses, and sank by the roadside. Through the trees gleamed the yellow lights of the quiet farms of France. Cows mooed softly in their byres, and watch-dogs barked at the moon. It was pleasant to rest in the soft grass by the side of the road and listen to the chirp of sleepy birds and arrogant cicadas. A pale light crept through the trees and touched to silver the bayonets of the stacked muskets. It flowed over the bronze mouths of the silent cannon. The army slept. . . . Bugles. Hoarse bugles shouting in the dawn, lifting their metal throats to the early sun. A multitude of men rising like miraculous grain from the earth. Straps were adjusted and buckles tightened. Kicking horses and mules were backed into shafts. The ground began to tremble again as the long columns resumed their march. Behind them a solitary coach rumbled nearer and nearer.

In the gesticulating crowd which lined the narrow rue de Largny of Villers-Cotterets and watched the grizzled veterans of the Grande Armée pass was a boy of thirteen, blue-eyed, with long fair curly hair just beginning to reveal signs of a crispness suspiciously negroid, and with thick red lips that suggested strawberries against his dazzlingly white complexion. He was dressed poorly in old-fashioned garments that had been cut down unmistakably from the clothes of an elder. His tall frame, thin as a lath, quivered to the grumble of the tambours and the spectacle of the slanting forest of bayonets. He clenched his hands and danced to the martial clangor. About him skipped his friends, small-town boys and girls in quaintly cut garments. He had not slept for three nights, not since Villers-Cotterets had been surrounded by the slowly moving columns of soldiers. The martial spirit of his dead father, that herculean giant called General Alexandre Dumas, stirred in him at the sight of the standards and guns and

beating drums. As he watched the Old Guard pass through the village street he seemed to hear a voice in the air above him, the voice of a tired man who had fought greatly and suffered and died at last in a bed, with the sword hung on the wall and the uniform laid away in a chest. Young Alexandre Dumas barely comprehended the tragedy which had befallen his father, but he understood that the Emperor was the moving cause of it. The Emperor had not liked his father. The Emperor had forgotten the man who had fought for General Bonaparte in Italy. He had erased from his rolls the name of the *diable noir* who had quelled the insurrection in the twisting streets of Cairo. He had many marshals, but not one of them had been named Dumas. The boy watched the regiments pass, and there were tears in his eyes as the riddled standards, close-folded in their cases, swept along the street. *Vive l'Empereur! Vive l'Empereur!* Young Dumas turned back toward the meager *bureau de tabac* where his mother, the wife of a Napoleonic general, eked out her precarious existence.

Couriers on winded horses dashed through the streets of Villers-Cotterets. They were exhausted men, in dusty uniforms, bearing important orders. They paused at the posting stables, delivered their messages, and hurried on. The rumor that the Emperor was to pass through Villers-Cotterets, following—as was his custom—the road which his Old Guard had taken, swept through the village. It was the twelfth of June, 1815. Between six and seven o'clock in the morning a pushing, excited crowd gathered at the end of the rue de Largny near the posting house; among them young Dumas. He desired intensely to see this man who had destroyed the career of his father. He wriggled his way to the foremost rank of the mob and waited. He did not want to see the coach pass in a cloud of yellow smoke but rather when it stopped and the horses were changed. So when he saw an approaching column of dust in the dry road he turned and sprinted before it toward the posting house. Behind him he could hear the clatter of hoofs, the rumbling of iron-tired wheels, the sharp crack of the coachman's whip. At the posting house he turned breathlessly and there swept by him three heavy carriages, the horses dripping with sweat, the postilions powdered and beribboned. A wave of

shouting villagers spun him forward and flung him toward one of these carriages, which had slowed its speed and stopped. Young Dumas gazed into the carriage. The Emperor was seated at the back, at the right, clothed in a green uniform faced with white. Upon his bosom glittered the star of the Legion of Honor. His brother, Jérôme, sat at his left, and facing this brother was the Emperor's aide, Letort. Napoleon looked pale and ill. His head, which seemed cut from a block of ivory, inclined slightly on his breast. He appeared to be thinking, to be oblivious of his surroundings. When he heard the excited clamor of the populace he raised his pale massive head and gazed about him. He looked through and beyond young Dumas.

"Where are we?" he asked. The voice was weary.

"At Villers-Cotterets, sire," answered his aide.

"Six leagues from Soissons, then?" he said.

His aide bowed his head.

"Quickly, then," he commanded. The marble head drooped, and he relapsed into the semi-stupor out of which he had so briefly aroused himself. The sweating, exhausted horses were removed from the carriage, and fresh animals were put in their places. New postilions leaped to their saddles. There was the sharp crack of a whip as the stable boys who had taken out the jaded horses waved their torn caps and shouted, *"Vive l'Empereur!"*

Napoleon made a slight inclination of his head. The carriage disappeared in a cloud of dust around the corner of the rue de Soissons.

Rumors.

They flew like ominous black crows over the villages of northern France.

In Villers-Cotterets ten days passed before news came through of the crossing of the Sambre, the taking of Charleroi, the battle of Ligny and the engagement of Quatre-Bras. These first echoes were those of victory.

The nineteenth of June passed and there was no news. It was rumored that Napoleon had visited the battlefield of Ligny and ordered assistance for the wounded. Letort had been killed.

The twentieth of June. Dark clouds and the threat of rain. No news.

The twenty-first of June. Rain.

The twenty-second of June. Heavy rains. Black skies.

The twenty-third of June. Rain. Rain slackening. Smoking earth.

Gossips met in the cafés and discussed matters. There could be no fighting in such weather. The heavy guns would stick in the mud. Napoleon . . .

Suddenly the rumor spread through Villers-Cotterets that some men bringing bad news had been arrested and taken before the mayor. These men were foreigners and they were mad. They declared that a decisive battle had been fought and that the French army had been annihilated. The English, Prussians, and Dutch were marching on Paris. The fools!

Young Dumas joined the rush toward the town hall.

Before the old building were ten or a dozen men, some of them still on their mud-splashed horses, others standing in the road. They were covered with blood, and their uniforms were in rags. They spoke a strange language. They said they were Poles. The villagers surrounded them, crying out that they were spies or escaped German prisoners. These exhausted men persisted in their tale that Napoleon had engaged the English on the eighteenth of June, that the battle began at noon, that he had defeated them by five o'clock, that Blücher had arrived with forty thousand men at six o'clock, that the retirement of the French army before this fresh onslaught had developed into a rout, that all was lost, and that they were but the vanguard of the fugitives. The villagers of Villers-Cotterets refused to believe this tale. They shook their heads and muttered, "You will see." They threatened the Poles with imprisonment, with death. The Poles stood fast by their story.

Knots of people met in the street and conversed in low voices. Perhaps . . . after all. . . . There were white faces and startled eyes.

Young Dumas and his mother installed themselves at the posting house, for there, if anywhere, fresh and reliable news would come.

At seven o'clock a courier arrived, covered with mud from head to foot and on a horse ready to drop with fatigue. He ordered four horses to be ready for a carriage that followed him. He answered no questions but mounting his winded horse, set forth again toward the south. The four horses were harnessed and placed near the road.

Young Dumas heard the rumble of the carriage and glanced up. A look of amazement spread across his face.

"Is it really he?" he whispered to the posting master. That gentleman, who stood stupefied, nodded his head.

The Emperor sat in the corner of the carriage. The same pale, sickly, impassive face bowed over the star of the Legion of Honor. The head was a little lower than it had been when he had driven through Villers-Cotterets in the other direction.

"Where are we?" he asked in an expressionless voice.

"At Villers-Cotterets, sire."

"Eighteen leagues from Paris?"

"Yes, sire."

The head bowed lower. "Go on," he said.

It was true, then.

The widow and the son of General Alexandre Dumas walked slowly home.

Shattered brigades, weaponless, without drums, poured through Villers-Cotterets in a motley crowd. There was no order, no silver streak of bayonets, no regimental bands playing *"Veillons au salut de l'empire."* These men, powder-blackened, in bloody bandages, with their eyes rolling in the fear of death, no longer were a part of the formidable Grande Armée that had marched northward beneath the flags of Austerlitz, Wagram and Moskova. They were the smashed bits of a machine. They were the débris of an Empire which had ceased to exist. The heavy burden had been torn from the back of Atlas.

After the fugitives who had extricated themselves from the carnage came the wounded, first those who could walk or hobble on crutches, then those who could neither walk nor sit on horseback but must lie on their backs pressing their hands against gaping wounds swathed in stained cloths. For two days this pathetic procession, the funeral of an Empire, passed through Villers-Cotterets, and for two days young Dumas watched it and compared it with the even ranks of legendary giants who had tramped toward Waterloo so short a time before. History was like that. An army was marched up a hill and an army was marched down a hill. An Emperor placed a crown upon his

head and a fat man in a wide straw hat wandered helplessly about St. Helena. A stout artillery officer in riding breeches left the Tuileries and a stouter Bourbon puffed his way in. The sun fell upon the Vendôme column and the rain fell on Longwood. Somewhere the Ironic Power turned a page glittering with bees and picked up the pen of Time and wrote upon a new page the name Louis-Stanislas-Xavier, Comte de Provence, and then, as an afterthought, Louis XVIII. History was the interplay of specters in a world that did not exist. It was a handful of dates clothed with phantom flesh.

During the days when Maréchal Brune was butchered at Avignon and Murat was shot at Pizzo and Maréchal Ney executed in the walk leading to the Observatoire in Paris, young Alexandre Dumas was hunting in the woods about Villers-Cotterets. Brought up in a village near great stretches of woodland full of small game, the friend of gamekeepers, and with the rare sense of the *chasseur* bred in him, the boy naturally sought his relaxation in running down small wild creatures. He was never so happy as when stalking birds through the tall trees or lying beneath green bushes in wait for the scurry of tiny feet. He had not, as yet, achieved the age of reflection. He was, however, the son of his father, and to understand him it is necessary to comprehend the type of man General Alexandre Dumas represented.

## II

General Thomas-Alexandre Dumas was born about the year 1762 at Jérémie, on the coast of Santo Domingo and no great distance from that New Continent where Chateaubriand's bronzed children of nature traveled through virgin wildernesses. He was the son of Alexandre-Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie and a negress called Marie-Cessette Dumas. He was, therefore, a mulatto. Whether or not he heard in his infancy the sharp thunder of voodoo drums in the surrounding hills is a mystery. He did not have the gift of graphic description which was to be his son's solitary heritage. He was a man of action, not a creature of retrospection.

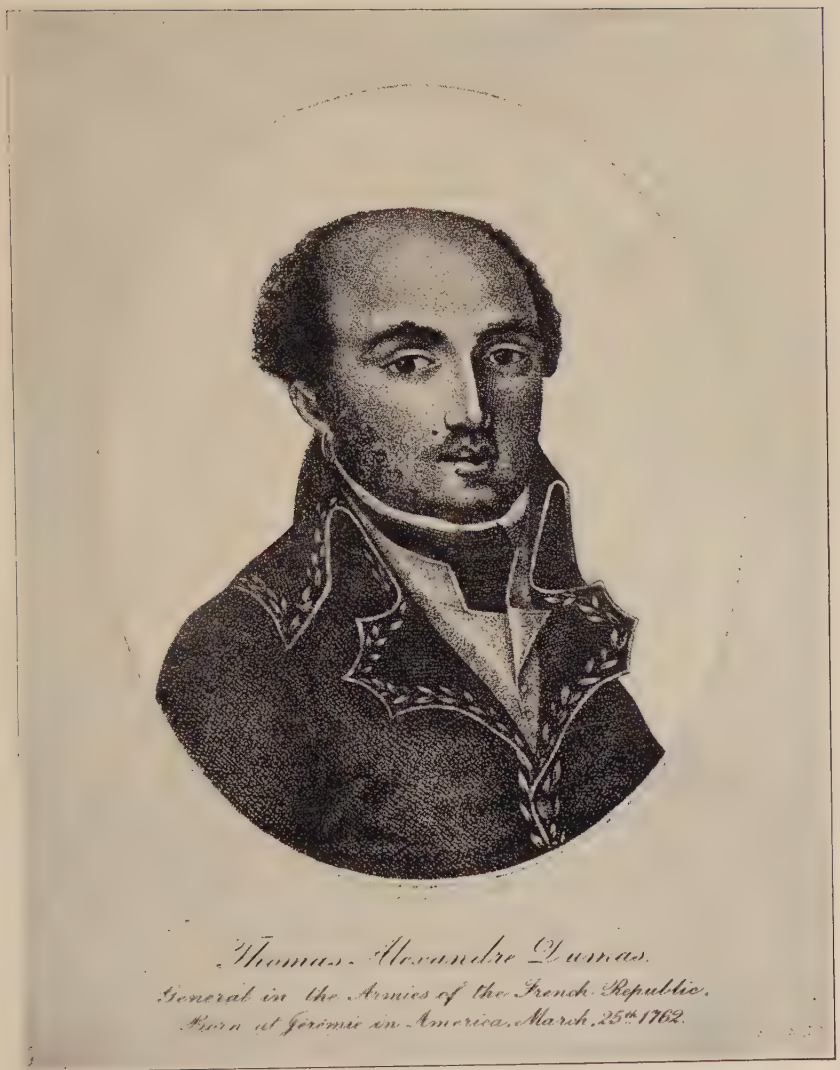
There is no proof nor is there any reason to believe that Alexandre-Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie and Marie-Cessette Dumas were mar-

ried. Indeed, circumstantial evidence would appear to run counter to any such supposition. The young French officers and stray court adventurers who arrived in Santo Domingo were not inclined to take wives, although enough of them settled temporarily with black mistresses. The government frowned severely upon such mésalliances; they prognosticated broken careers immediately. The negresses did not expect marriage; it was enough for them to have the guardianship of white men either in government service or under French protection.

Alexandre-Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie laid claim to the title of marquis and so far as any evidence reveals he was permitted to bear it. Just where he acquired this title is lost in the mists of time. He claimed that the marquisate had been created by Louis XIV in 1707, but mention of it is not to be found in the bulky registers of the period. It is evident, however, that Alexandre-Antoine (who appears to have been rather eccentric) came from an important Normandy family. He held various positions at court, served with the Duc de Richelieu at Phillipsbourg where an ancestor of Alfred de Musset, François de Pray, was killed, and was at one time first gentleman of the chamber to the Prince de Conti. By 1760 he became weary of the pastimes of the Regency and the reign that succeeded it, and selling his goods and estates, departed for Santo Domingo, where he purchased a plantation. Properly enough, he preferred alligators to the Regent. Arriving in the primitive island, he lost no time in attaching to himself the black but presumably comely Marie-Cessette Dumas.

The year 1780 was a year of rumors. Even Santo Domingo was permeated with them. To the west of that island a new nation was struggling for freedom. Far to the east France waited while subterranean rivers of passion mounted higher steadily toward a glittering crust. Alexandre-Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie developed a nostalgia for the frivolities of court life at Versailles and a mild disgust for the swarming blacks on his plantation. He returned to France, therefore, bringing with him a sturdy black son of eighteen. Marie-Cessette Dumas had died in 1772.

Thomas-Alexandre made a curious appearance among the Fayettes and Lazuns of Paris and Versailles. He was unquestionably a Negro; but he was handsome, graceful as a tiger, a formidable swordsman, a




*The father of Dumas was called* le diable noir *by his contemporaries*

magnificent rider, and unbelievably strong. He was also simple and importunate. Women (if we are to believe the romantic sentimentalization of him by his son) adored him. Thomas-Alexandre, however, was a man of action with a greater inclination for the battlefield than for the boudoir. Women were just another kind of alligator to him. For some years, notwithstanding his martial predilections, the young man occupied himself with the frivolous life of the caste into which, because of his birth, he had been introduced. Then his father married.

Alexandre-Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie had been in France but four years when he took unto his aged bosom another mate. Eccentric as ever, he bestowed his name upon his housekeeper, a seemingly worthy woman named Marie-Françoise Retou. Either Thomas-Alexandre did not like the housekeeper or the housekeeper did not like her swarthy stepson, for a rift appeared in the hitherto happy home of the seventy-four-year-old nobleman. It resolved itself into a dispersal of antagonists. Thomas-Alexandre determined to join the army, not as an officer (the usual prerogative of noblemen's sons) but as a private. This low rank would seem to point again to the illegitimacy of the young man and to suggest an inability on the father's part to do much for his black offspring. An estrangement between father and son followed, and when Thomas-Alexandre took the oath of office to the King in 1786 he enlisted as Alexandre Dumas, discarding the rolling name of Davy de la Pailleterie. It is doubtful that it legally belonged to him. His regiment was the Queen's Dragoons. Thirteen days after Thomas-Alexandre enlisted Alexandre-Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie died, at the age of seventy-six. His death certificate does not denominate him a marquis but refers to him as "Seigneur Alexandre-Antoine Davy de la Pailleterie, knight, seigneur, and patron of Bielleville." Like a good old aristocrat he refused to live long enough to witness the fall of the Bastille.

Private Alexandre Dumas joined his regiment at Laon, where he did barrack duty, interrupted by various duels, and marked impatient time while the French Revolution seethed to the boiling point. The subterranean rivers of passion reached the glittering crust and crashed through. The National Assembly was constituted; the Bastille fell;

the gutters of Paris ran blood; Mirabeau sprang into prominence, thundered, and died; the vague forms of Marat, Danton, Robespierre, Camille Desmoulins, loomed like fanatical genii in the smoking air above Notre Dame; a swarthy artillery officer with long hair listened attentively to the voice of Destiny; Alexandre Dumas, now a corporal, changed guard, went through military evolutions, and waited impatiently for the call of Time.

In 1790 he was transferred with a detachment of troops to Villers-Cotterets. How charming the little town was in the sunlight! How still it seemed among the green trees! There he met Marie-Louise-Elizabeth Labouret, whose father, Claude, was proprietor of the little Hôtel de l'Écu. The black, gigantic-shouldered noncommissioned officer observed the village girl with an attentive and kindling eye. And Marie-Louise observed the astonishing young man. No one like him had ever come to Villers-Cotterets. There were walks in the woodland, quiet dinners, the charming progress of a French courtship. In November, 1792, Alexandre Dumas married Marie-Louise-Elizabeth Labouret. He was no longer a noncommissioned officer; Time had begun to move swiftly with him.

The Revolution had spread like fire through France, and coalitions were being formed among the frightened foreign powers who saw in this conflagration a grave menace against the idea of hereditary monarchy. Leopold I, of Germany, and Frederick-William II, of Prussia, met at Pilnitz on August 27, 1791, and drafted that famous declaration regarding the reëstablishment of the bewildered Louis XVI. On January 14, 1792, the National Assembly of France invited the badgered Louis to demand explanations from the foreign powers concerning this declaration. No satisfactory reply was returned, and French troops were ordered to the menaced frontiers. The Queen's Dragoons was among the commands so moved, and with it went Alexandre Dumas, now a brigadier. Various skirmishes ensued along the frontier. At Maulde the young man distinguished himself in action for the first time by capturing thirteen Tyrolean chasseurs single-handed.

During this chaotic period all France rushed to arms. While the guillotine was doing its deadly work in Paris and other cities, regiment after regiment of young, freedom-intoxicated men was bul-

warking the frontiers against threatened invasions. Eight hundred thousand men enlisted and within a year the infant Republic of France had a dozen armies at its disposal. The swarthy young artillery officer from Corsica was still listening to the voice of Destiny. It was a time of quick promotions, when quality of service and natural ability outweighed the perquisites of birth.

In September, 1792 (two months before his marriage), brigadier Dumas became a second lieutenant. The next day he was created a first lieutenant. Three months later he became a lieutenant-colonel. In July, 1793, he was appointed brigadier-general of the Army of the North. He was thirty-one years old. In September of this year he was made a general of division of the same army. Five days later he was commissioned general commander-in-chief of the Army of the Western Pyrenees. Thus in twenty months he had risen from a private in the ranks to an army commander. It was in this way that adventurous men rose during the French Revolution.

At Bayonne while commanding the Army of the Western Pyrenees (a post disputed him by some of the Representatives of the People) he first received a nickname. His chambers opened on the public square where the bright red guillotine—the mother of the Revolution —was set up, and when the ghastly hours of execution arrived and all the other windows were filled with screaming observers General Dumas closed his shutters tightly. The sight of the decapitated heads rolling into bloody baskets was not to his liking. The fruit of the pikes did not appeal to him. The *sans-culottes,* observing this noble weakness, gathered under his windows in a dirty, gesticulating, garlic-reeking crowd and yelled, "Hah! *Monsieur de l'Humanité!* Come to the window! Show yourself!" In spite of threats the General stood behind his closed shutters, a brace of cocked pistols in his hands, his startled aides beside him, waiting for what might happen. Nothing did happen except the nickname *"Monsieur de l'Humanité."* That, in the time of the Terror, was not such a disgrace, after all.

The General's strength and humanity were his predominant characteristics. This strength was such that he could lift a heavy gate by its hinges, raise four army muskets by inserting his fingers into the barrels, fling a recalcitrant soldier over a wall, crush a helmet in his

hands, and stifle a horse between his legs. In battle there was a recklessness about him that was almost legendary. He was entirely devoid of fear. He possessed the divine simplicity of the Negro. While he was with the Army of the Alps he scaled the heights of Mont-Cenis with three thousand men and captured that crucial point. The detachment climbed the steep bluff by means of iron frost nails thrust into the rock, and Dumas warned his men that any who slipped were lost and that, therefore, it would be futile to cry out. The cry would not save the man but it would imperil the enterprise by warning the unsuspecting enemy. Three men did fall and there was no sound but the hollow rebound of their smashed bodies from rock to rock.

Perhaps Dumas's greatest feat was his defense of the bridge of Clausen, an example of bravery that won for him the somewhat melodramatic title of the "Horatius Cocles of the Tyrol." This grandiose nomenclature, which starts a smile now, was natural enough in the days of the French Revolution. There were many a Brutus and Aristides then.

Dumas had suffered several reverses by the time this opportunity occurred. He had reached his peak as a commander and was already toppling. He lacked the astuteness of the young artillery officer from Corsica. He was too simple. He had been recalled to Paris from the Army of the Alps to answer charges made against him, these charges dwindling to the accusation that he had ordered a guillotine taken down and chopped into firewood for his troops. *Monsieur de l'Humanité* again. He had been acquitted of these charges and sent to the Army of the Sambre-et-Meuse. There he had marked time discontentedly enough until, losing hope, he had handed in his resignation and gone back to the quiet village of Villers-Cotterets, where his wife and a two-year-old daughter, Aimée-Alexandrine, awaited him. But France—or rather the Directory—needed him. He had been recalled to action and after several disappointing shifts from command to command he was ordered to Italy, there to place himself at the disposal of General Bonaparte.

He reached Milan on October 19, 1796, and was cordially received by Bonaparte and that warm-blooded Creole, Joséphine. How warmly Joséphine received him is but a suspicion and a conjecture. Bonaparte himself—that lean-faced adventurer—was suffering from scurvy, and

his general appearance suggested that of a walking skeleton. Perhaps an inward agitation over the fortune of the next few months added to this leanness. Dumas was ordered immediately to the command of the first division before Mantua. The campaign that ensued is now a part of familiar history. It is unnecessary to outline it. Arcola and Rivoli were tremendous stepping-stones for the Corsican. He who was as yet hardly aware of that sleepless demon which inhabited his brain was already on his resistless march toward the Crown of France. As for Dumas, that other adventurer, he was tasting the thanklessness of endeavor. His bravery in battle was of no avail, for the jealousy of other generals was something against which this simple-minded, straightforward officer could not cope. It is possible that he was too blunt, too difficult to agree with his fellow officers; at any rate, the campaign ended with his divisional rank being incorporated with that of Masséna. Eventually, after some complaint on General Dumas's part, he was sent to Joubert, who commanded the French troops in the Tyrol. It was while he was with Joubert that he achieved the feat which gave him the high-sounding name of the Horatius Cocles of the Tyrol.

During the rapid advance upon the retreating Austrians the French troops under General Dumas reached the bridge of Clausen, which had been barricaded by the enemy. Carts had been piled up, and behind them with leveled guns waited the powder-blackened Austrian infantry and cavalry. The position seemed impregnable to the assault of a detachment as small as General Dumas's. The General did not think so. He called for twenty-five volunteers and rushed for the bridge through a rain of bullets, his men following him. What could they do but follow such a leader? It is the quality of great generals that their personalities mesmerize the fear out of their followers. It is the peculiar sort of madness that explains Dumas and Cambronne and Murat. Reaching the barricade of carts, Dumas and his men managed to overturn them into the rushing torrent beneath. All this time a hail of Austrian bullets was mowing down the reckless French troops. Scarcely was the bridge clear when Dumas leaped on his horse and started down the village street leading from the once-barricaded span. His aide shouted after him in vain. Dumas was deaf to warnings; the fierce Negro who neither reasons nor retreats was in

the ascendant. Suddenly the General was confronted by a platoon of Austrian cavalry and with one back-handed sweep of his heavy saber he killed a quartermaster, gashed horribly the soldier next to him, and with the point of the weapon wounded a third. The Austrians, thinking that the devil had suddenly come out of hell and set upon them, wheeled their horses in a riot of fear. The chargers lurched against one another, stumbled, and fell pell-mell with their screaming riders. At that moment Dumas's dragoons came up and the entire Austrian platoon was captured.

No sooner was this accomplished than Dumas, followed by fifty dragoons and a bewildered aide, set off in pursuit of a considerable body of cavalry which he perceived climbing a mountain on the other side of the village. Outstripping the dragoons, the General and his aide came within hailing distance of the enemy. "So it is you, *schwartzer Teufel!*" cried the Austrian commander. Dumas was about to set upon the Austrians by himself when his aide, who appears to have possessed the rudiments of tactical reasoning, grasped the General's horse by the bridle and held him back. Prudence was a quality lacking in Dumas, and it may have been this absence of a necessary characteristic that did its share in placing the maréchal's baton beyond his reach. His impetuosity was excellent in actual combat, but the responsibilities of his command were not aided by it. As a matter of fact, the Austrians had lured Dumas and his small detachment across the bridge in order to destroy them. It was the resourceful aide—his name was Dermancourt—who discovered this and explained it to the General. Dumas, thereupon, fell back upon the bridge. The Austrians were about it and the fight became a shamble of falling horses, men with heads cloven, blood, dust, and death. Impetuosity may be retrieved only by impetuosity. Dumas saw that the bridge would be cut off from his command unless it were defended. He reached the head of the span and held it alone against an entire squadron of Austrians hurled upon it. The enemy could advance over the narrow planking by couples only, and as fast as they came on Dumas mowed them down with his huge saber. Horatius Cocles! Fresh troops arrived and the General was relieved. He had killed seven or eight men, had received three wounds, his horse had been killed under him, and seven bullets had passed through his cloak. It was brawn and not

brain that had done this. Napoleon could not have achieved such a feat. Neither would Napoleon have fallen into this predicament.

Egypt. A burning sun. The defense of Alexandria. Dumas, hunting rifle in hand, headed the carabineers of the Fourth light demi-brigade. Bonaparte listened to Destiny while Desaix marched through a parched land toward the minarets of Cairo. The names of the French dead were carved on Pompey's Pillar. Aboukir. Rosetta. Dejection and discontent among the troops. The Battle of the Pyramids. "Soldiers, forty centuries are looking down upon you." The entry into Cairo. What was all this about? Was the Republic to plant a colony here? What about Cambyses and St. Louis? This land devoured men. There was a queer light in the eyes of Bonaparte. He understood now what Destiny said. The generals began to grumble among themselves. What were they but pawns in a game they did not comprehend? Were they fighting for the Republic or Bonaparte? Dumas was among the grumblers. He was ill-humored. He had not been given a division to command. He was a determined Republican. Bonaparte observed him with a malicious sidelong glance.

There was an insurrection in the streets of Cairo. The muezzins cried for revolt in place of prayers and the narrow lanes swarmed with murderous Moslems. General Dupuis was assassinated. Cannons belched through the twisting thoroughfares and Dumas, regardless of the sharp knives, rode into the Grand Mosque of El-Heazao on horseback. The revolt was quelled. Bonaparte took Dumas by the hand and called him a Hercules. But there was a strange look in the commander's eyes. Dumas became despondent. He applied for leave to return to France. This desire became a mania. Friends strove to dissuade him but he persisted. At length Bonaparte shrugged his shoulders and bade him go. Dumas purchased four thousand pounds of Mocha coffee, eleven Arabian horses, chartered a small vessel, and turned his dark face toward France.

He would never have another command in the French army. His career was ended.

What was all this about? Was it not as much the fact that Dumas had seen command after command taken away from him, had achieved miraculous feat after miraculous feat only to receive no

reward, and had been bowed down by a gathering load of grievances, as it was the integrities of the Republican ardor?

The woes of Dumas did not end with his departure from Alexandria. The quiet village of Villers-Cotterets was farther away than he imagined.

A fierce storm arose on the Mediterranean Sea and his tiny vessel was buffeted fiercely by the gale. It sprang a leak and to lighten the boat the cargo was flung overboard. Ten piece of cannon, the only defense, went. Then the eleven Arabian horses. After that, the four thousand pounds of Mocha coffee. And last of all, the personal luggage of Dumas and his companions. Running before the wind and settling more and more in the malevolent gray-green waters, the cockleshell sighted the coast of Calabria and made for the port of Taranto. Dumas was under the impression that Naples was friendly to France. He was to be disillusioned.

From March 17, 1799, to April 5, 1801, he was imprisoned by the Neapolitan authorities, and during this incarceration he suffered all sorts of hardships, among them several attempted poisonings. When he was exchanged for the ineffectual General Mack he arrived in France a broken man, deaf, and with the first symptoms of cancer gnawing his stomach.

The rest of his life—but five years remained—Dumas was to pass writing pleading letters to his old commanders, to the government, to Napoleon, begging for his portion of the Neapolitan indemnity for French prisoners and the arrears of salary due him.

He received exactly nothing. Bonaparte might forget his friends but he never forgot his enemies.

On the twenty-fifth of July, 1802 (or, as it was called then, sixth Thermidor, Year X), General Dumas wrote the following letter to his friend, General Brune:

> "My dear Brune, I announce to you with joy that my wife gave birth yesterday morning to a big boy who weighs nine pounds and is eighteen inches long. You will see that if he continues to grow in the outside world as he has in the interior he promises to reach a pretty fine stature.

"Another thing you should know: I count on you to be his godfather. My eldest daughter, who sends you a thousand kisses from the tips of her little black fingers, will be your fellow godparent. Come quickly, though the new arrival into this world does not seem to wish to leave it in any hurry; come quickly, for it has been a long time since I saw you, and I have a great desire to see you.

"Your friend, Alex. Dumas.

"P. S. I open the letter to inform you that the young dog has just eased himself all over his head. That is a good sign, surely!"

It was in this way that Dumas announced the birth of his son, Alexandre, who came into the world about five o'clock of the morning of July 24, 1802.

Madame Dumas had been to a puppet show shortly before the birth of her second and last child and there she had seen a horrible little black devil called Berlick. She turned pale and gasped, "I am lost. I shall give birth to a Berlick." She was wrong, for the infant was fair, with blue eyes and with light hair. The attributes of Negro blood were as yet concealed by time and were not to reveal themselves until years later when the boy was approaching manhood.

## III

The earliest years of Alexandre Dumas's life—and now I am writing of the son and no longer of the father—were flashes seen through the gray mists of oblivion. Certain pictures, vivid enough in quality, stood out in his mind's eye in later times. They were isolated scenes out of an infant life whose activities were circumscribed by poverty. However, the development of a mind may be foreshadowed from these pictures, these flashes of the past, these brief ghosts from a vanished world of mingled aristocratic and republican manners. There can be no doubt that the mind of the child was a receptacle for conflicting urges, that the picturesqueness of the old world aroused his excitable temperament, and that the honest austerities of republicanism influenced his reason. He was both Royalist and Revolutionist. In the first place, he was one of that troubled generation born under the suns

of Austerlitz. Between 1800 and 1815 a host of young men, conceived, as it were, between two battles, sprang into an agitated environment. About them was the débris of a Kingdom and reared on this débris was an Empire. An old world of corruption and color and leisure and aristocracy cried through the ensanguined crust of the Revolution, the Republic and the Empire. The young men heard these ancestral voices but dimly, for their ears were deafened by the immediate thunder of the Empire. Though their fathers might tell them of vacillating Louis, of "the Austrian" woman, of Du Barry, of the colored magnificence of a vanished court, they could not pause to listen. Their cradles were soothed by trumpets; their fathers were now following the eagles; there was an ardent music in the skies. It was the sonorous catalogue of victory after victory, the announcement of the tricolor flying from half the capitals of Europe. These children, then, were bathed in the bright glow of conquest.

But before they reached maturity all this changed. Setting a final period to all this glory, finishing one of the shortest chapters of history, God, inscrutable and contemptuous, cast his lot with the hook-nosed Wellington at Waterloo. God held Grouchy back and pushed Blücher forward. God troubled the reason of Napoleon and sent him his *belle Ferronnière* so that he might not sit on his horse during the eighteenth of June, 1815. God smashed down that edifice which had been reared in less than fifteen years. By the time this happened the children could think for themselves; at least, the rudimentary powers of reasoning were vouchsafed them. Their fathers and grandfathers represented two régimes for them; they, themselves, were the inheritors of a third. To children so born, to children whose early formative years were passed during fifteen years of military glory and bloody phantasmagoria, there must have come a new receptiveness toward the romantic implications of existence. The suppleness and uncertainty of history became manifest; the fact that life was not a measured thing but a surprising imbroglio of unsuspected occurrences translated their imaginations. It was during the Napoleonic era that the Romantic Movement in French thought and letters and drama was baptized in blood. The stately buskin was laid aside and the cape and sword were donned instead. The unborn voices of many heroes cried from the débâcle of the Empire, d'Artagnan, Fracasse, Quasi-

modo. Dumas was one of these children of romanticism: gusty, undisciplined, ignorant and careless of form, sentimental, exotic, instinctive. Pedantry and formality did not exist for him. From the very first he saw men and women as troubled shapes of flesh and blood and the earliest pictures of his infancy were observed through the strange mists of romance. It was because of this that he was so often an unconscious liar. All romanticists are liars. It is the fault of the spectacles through which they look at life.

Long before the child Dumas had observed the marblelike countenance of Napoleon returning from Waterloo he had touched hands with both the Empire and the old aristocratic ideal that the Revolution had smashed. Though he might be buried in his little town of Villers-Cotterets the specters of the great world glided before him. He had the stories of his father to listen to, stories spun out in the quiet evenings by the fire when the swarthy, cancer-eaten General would take down his great saber and talk of Bonaparte, of Desaix, of Masséna, of Joubert, of Murat, of Brune, of Jourdan, of Sébastiani, of Moreau, of Kléber. And there were tales that went farther back and were concerned with Richelieu, with the Prince de Conti, with Marie-Antoinette, with the Regent. There were even a few of these legendary characters upon whom the boy laid his own eyes, specters to whom he was brought by his dark-visaged father, cancer-ridden, forgotten by the Emperor, shouldering the griefs of an old cashiered officer, begging feebly at doors where justice was a stranger. Three of these pictures stood out most vividly in the boy's mind to the end of his life.

About the year 1805 General Dumas decided to travel to Paris to make a final appeal to some of his old friends to plead his cause before the Emperor. He also desired to consult a doctor. In spite of four years' unsuccess he still had hopes of obtaining the indemnity due him as one of the prisoners of Taranto, as well as the arrears of salary from the years of the Republic, VII and VIII. He took with him his three-year-old son. It was young Alexandre's first visit to Paris but he remembered every detail of it. There was his visit to his sister's boarding school in the rue de Harlay au Marais (for Aimée-Alexandrine, through the efforts of a relative, the Abbé Conseil, had

been put to school in Paris) where the clamorous attentions of the schoolgirls, who, charmed by the little boy's wavy hair, sought to caress him, outraged the dignified child. There was the immense apricot given him by his father as a bribe to permit his ears to be pierced for tiny gold earrings. There was a performance at the Opéra-Comique of *Paul et Virginie* in which Méhu and Madame de Saint-Aubin played the titular rôles, Virginie being decidedly *enceinte*. Most memorable of all was a visit to a great house where menservants in red livery ushered in the dark General and his little son. It was in this house that Alexandre Dumas first touched hands with the past. Together with his father he was led through various chambers to a bedroom where a gracious old lady was lying on a couch. The General remained in conversation with her for some time, and the boy knelt at the foot of the couch, his blue eyes fastened upon the waxlike aristocratic countenance of the woman who occasionally bowed over him and once or twice printed a kiss on his forehead. She was Madame la Marquise de Montesson, widow of Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, that Louis-Philippe who was grandson of the Regent. This *grande dame* from the Eighteenth Century, emanating the fastidious manners of a vanished era, was the first of the boy's specters from the past. His father had known M. de Richelieu, that reckless gentleman who had been placed in the Bastille as a penalty for being discovered under the bed of Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne. Thus the two, father and son, spanned a century between them. At the time, the boy, looking upon the face of Madame la Marquise de Montesson, considered her no more than a kindly old lady. Years later he realized that she was a part of history, of history that had ceased to exist even when the boy stared curiously at her waxlike face.

The day after this momentous visit to Charlotte-Jeanne Béraud de la Haie de Riou, Marquise de Montesson, General Dumas invited two of his old friends to lunch with him. They were Murat and Brune, both maréchaux of the Empire, one of whom was to become a King. There must have been uncertainty in General Dumas's mind when he sent invitations to these two soldiers, now august personages in the court which Napoleon I, Emperor of the French, had set up in the Tuileries. But both came, perhaps from a troublesome sense of duty

toward an old companion in arms. Murat was cold and distant. The shadow of a crown hung over him and he could not compromise himself in any way. Brune was as cordial as he had been in the old days. Dumas sensed the coldness of Murat and understood that the cordiality of Brune was ineffectual enough, for he ceased to plead for himself but turned the conversation on his wife and his children, especially his son. They, at least, should be aided in some way after the father was gone. There was death in General Dumas's face and the two maréchaux, Murat half-heartedly and Brune with a real determination, promised to do what they could in time to come. Dumas, pathetically eager to interest these men in his son, called the child to him, placed Brune's great saber between his legs and Murat's cocked hat upon his head, and bade him prance about the room. "Do not forget," said the father, "that to-day you have ridden about that table on Brune's sword and with Murat's hat upon your head and that yesterday you were kissed by Madame de Montesson, widow of the Duc d'Orléans." Then he smiled at his guests. Murat gazed coldly out the window, but Brune smiled sympathetically. In this way two more specters were added to the boy's recollections. Ten years after this episode both Murat and Brune were to die sudden deaths, the first shot by court-martial at Pizzo, and the second murdered by the inflamed populace of Avignon. At that time Alexandre Dumas, aged thirteen, was hunting larks in the forest about Villers-Cotterets.

There was to be still a third picture for the boy. It happened in this same year, later than the unsuccessful trip to Paris, which, after all, had produced nothing but three specters. The month was October and the dead leaves, shriveled and brown, drifted in whispering flight before the rattling carriage of General Dumas and his son. The skies were that sad autumnal gray which presages the icy advance of winter. The carriage halted before a château half-hidden in a bower of trees, and servants, unlike those of Madame de Montesson, for they wore liveries of green, ushered the General and his son through several chambers, all richly tapestried, to a small boudoir, hung with cashmere, where a beautiful young woman reclined upon a sofa. The plump outline of her body shone through the thin stuff of her dress. The boy was enchanted with her tiny embroidered slip-

pers. She smiled often and ate bonbons lazily from a decorated box. She did not rise but bade the General to sit beside her on the floor, and she played with the buttons of his coat with her tiny slippers. She was white, small and plump, sensuous, a bit of Tanagra beside the swarthy General with the tired eyes. The boy, mesmerized by the soft odors of the boudoir, wondered whether he were asleep or awake. The lazy conversation of the young woman was broken by the guttural speech of the general. Suddenly outside there sounded the clear peal of hunting horns, the barking of dogs, and the shouts of riders. Then the General, rising to his feet, lifted this young woman and bore her to the window where she could see the stag bounding by, the hounds, their red tongues lolling, in swift pursuit, and after them the hunters darting through the autumn foliage. This was not an enchanted princess in some lost bower out of time. The place was the Château of Montgobert, near Villers-Cotterets, and the young woman in the embroidered slippers was Pauline Bonaparte, Princesse Borghese.

General Dumas grew weaker. His swarthy features took on the ashen pallor that betrays the ravages of an inward disease. He rode very rarely and isolated himself for long hours in his room, sitting and gazing vacantly out of the window while the sad thoughts he could not suppress slid like snakes through his mind. He thought of the Emperor striding through the corridors of the Tuileries, of the warm-blooded Creole, Joséphine, in her coronation mantle, of the booted and spurred maréchaux, of the cockades, the tambours, the neighing horses. Young Alexandre grew aware of a still house where his mother, already worn with household duties, moved about silently and where there was little laughter. Outside the winter shut down on Villers-Cotterets. The streets were deserted. At night it was extremely dark and a bitter wind came out of the forest and roared through the lanes, lifting high the sparks of wood-fire from the chimneys.

There was not much for the small boy to do. He could ruminate by the fireplace, perhaps, and wonder what had become of Truffe, the large dark dog that had been a part of the family the year before when they had lived in Les Fosses, the small country house to which

the General had removed from the rue de Lormet. They were now in the little hotel that Madame Dumas's father had once owned. But it was no longer the Hôtel de l'Écu; the shield with the three *fleurs de lis* had gone out of fashion since 1792; it had become the Hôtel de l'Épée. At least the sword was still in fashion. And it was no longer owned by Claude Labouret. Monsieur Picot owned it. The Hôtel de l'Épée was not at all like Les Fosses. Truffe was gone; there was no gardener to provide the little boy with frogs and grass snakes; even the old guardsman, Mocquet, a relic of General Dumas's warlike days, had vanished. There was nothing but a few small rooms, a sword on the wall, and the winter wind howling outside and nosing at the crevices.

One cold day (it was February 24, 1806) the General received a letter. He opened it and read:

> "Just as I am starting for the forest I have received an order from M. Collard to permit General Dumas to hunt and shoot. I hasten to send it to him with all good wishes, and my sincere hopes that his state of health will permit him to make use of it. Our sincere regards to Madame Dumas. Deviolaine."

The General put down the letter with tears of anger in his eyes. He had applied months before for this permission, a seasonal permission which automatically ran from the twenty-third of September to the sixth of March. And now he received it on the twenty-fourth of February when it had but a dozen days to run. He knew who was behind this slight. Alexandre Berthier, Maréchal of the Empire and Master of Hounds to the Crown, was empowered to grant hunting permits. Berthier was his enemy. Berthier had reported him as standing and looking on at the siege of Mantua. Sly, malevolent Berthier! The General rose to his feet, his face distorted by pain and humiliation, and hobbled out of the house. A few minutes later he was astride his horse and urging it down the village street. In less than half an hour he returned and was helped from the saddle. It was the last time he was to be on the back of a horse. He was led into the house and put to bed. It was the last time he was to walk on the face of a thankless earth.

During the night he woke in a delirium and asked for a cane with

a golden knob. He had beaten the Neapolitan ruffians of the prisons of Brindisi with this cane when they attempted to assassinate him. He desired that it be buried with him. Later he ordered that the golden knob be removed and melted into a nugget. It was to be his legacy to his wife and children. He fell into a troubled sleep from which he awoke, clear-headed and calm, in the morning. A cold, wintry sunshine lighted the small room, and the dying General gazed about him at the meagerness of his possessions. On the wall was the sword and near it was his braided coat and the hat with the tricolored cockade. There was a box full of documents, letters, army orders. There was no maréchal's baton; neither was there the simple order of the Legion of Honor. At the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea were four thousand pounds of Mocha coffee and the washed bones of eleven Arabian horses. In the coffers of Napoleon was the Neapolitan indemnity. There, too, were arrears in salary amounting to 28,500 francs. The General could leave his family nothing but thirty roods of land, now the possession of Claude Labouret, and the reversion of a house and garden, the rent of which went for life to a certain M. Harlay. That was all. Except the sword, the braided jacket, the hat with the tricolored cockade and a handful of dusty memories. Of course there were the promises of maréchaux Murat and Brune. The cold and aloof countenance of Murat hovered for an instant in the room and disappeared. The General turned on his side and let the tears fall on his pillow.

About five o'clock young Alexandre was bundled into his coat and carried away to the house of his cousin, Marianne, in the rue de Soissons. He enjoyed going to his cousin's house; there was a forge there and a boy named Picard who worked the forge and told thrilling stories and showed Alexandre how to make fireworks from iron filings. Marianne's father, M. Fortier, was a locksmith, and his shadow became a grotesque giant as it flickered between the fire of the forge and the wall. The little boy sat and watched the fantastic reflections and the play of light and shadow until eight o'clock in the evening, when his cousin led him to a small room and put him to bed. He fell into the deep sleep of children. He was weary, and many perplexing things had happened during the day, unknown footsteps on the stairs and subdued voices outside a room.

About midnight he was awakened by a loud knocking at the door. He sat up immediately and turned to his cousin's bed, and saw her upright, silent and terrified. Nobody could knock at that inner door for there were two other closed doors between it and the street. The boy felt no fear but stepped out of the bed and approached the door.

"Alexandre! Alexandre!" cried Marianne, the bedclothes huddled about her. "Where are you going?"

Alexandre replied simply.

"I am opening the door for papa," he said. "He has come to say good-bye to us."

Marianne leaped out of bed and forced the boy back into his cot. He struggled against her, crying out, "Good-bye, papa! Good-bye, papa!"

A dying breath seemed to sigh across his face and, sobbing and exhausted, he fell asleep.

As the clock was striking midnight General Alexandre Dumas, once commander-in-chief of the Army of the Western Pyrenees, died with his head cradled in the arms of his sobbing wife.

Madame Dumas, coming down the narrow stairs from the room of death, met her son Alexandre, three and a half years old, climbing up and dragging a heavy single-barreled gun after him.

"Where are you going?" she cried. "I thought you were at your uncle's house."

"I am going to heaven," answered the boy.

"To heaven!"

"Yes."

The child strove to push by her.

"What are you going to heaven for?"

Alexandre drew a sobbing breath. He said:

"I am going to kill God for killing my father."

His mother burst into tears.

# CHAPTER TWO

## THE IDYL OF VILLERS-COTTERETS

### I

Madame Dumas was desperate. She wrote the most urgent pleas to all of General Dumas's old comrades, Brune, Murat, Augereau, Lannes, Jourdan, imploring them to intercede with the Emperor for a pension. Most of them ignored or tore up the letters. Time had moved on since the *diable noir* had led his inflamed Republicans into battle, and the very name of Dumas could be recalled only by an effort. He had fallen by the way as had so many other brilliant young officers who had incurred the displeasure of Napoleon. Brune, however, went to the Emperor and ventured to broach the subject. After all, the man had taken Mont-Cenis. He had held the bridge at Clausen. He had quelled the insurrection in Cairo. He . . . Napoleon turned on his heel angrily. "I forbid you ever to mention that fellow's name to me again," he exclaimed. Madame Dumas received a letter from Jourdan explaining that pensions could be granted only to the widows of soldiers who had died on the field of battle or from wounds within six months after receiving them. The mother made one more effort. She traveled to Paris and applied for an audience with the Emperor. She would face him in the Tuileries and plead her cause. The audience was curtly refused. She was only the poorer by the money laid out for the journey. There was no help, then.

Alexandre, playing in the room where his father had died, was unaware of these heartbreaking negotiations. The spring had come; the weather was fair; the *chasseurs* were plunging into the deep forests, guns upon their shoulders. He was beginning to look about him and recognize the various aspects of his environment. It was

altogether charming. There were to be eight years of peace and childish pastimes and that blessed unconsciousness of the obligations of existence which is the particular privilege of the small boy. Nothing was to trouble him except the excitements of curiosity and the fears of childhood. Eight years passed swiftly in the village streets of Villers-Cotterets, the small room in the Hôtel de l'Épée, the ruined castle near the town, the dwelling and town garden of M. Deviolaine, the cloister at St. Remy, the château of Villers-Hellon were M. Collard lived, and the great park of François I, of Henri II, of Henri IV, and the tiny cemetery of Pleux where the sagging gravestones were overgrown with moss and vines. Three of these houses Dumas was to love and dream about in later years.

Next door to the Hôtel de l'Épée was the house of Madame Darcourt, and to it the little boy often made his way. Madam Darcourt, the widow of a military surgeon, and her two children, Antoine, who was about twenty-eight at this time, and Éléanore, who was twenty-four or twenty-five, were extraordinarily kind to the fatherless child. The impressionable boy responded quickly to this kindness. As appealing to him as the kindness, however, was the large edition of Buffon, plentifully besprinkled with colored plates, which Madame Darcourt put in his hands. He learned to read from this book, through his eagerness to understand the habits of the batrachians and ophidians that ornamented the pages. Thus at the age when most children are still spelling he had read this large tome and many of the other volumes that formed the child's library of that day. It was no small accomplishment in the opening decade of the Nineteenth Century.

Another household that received him warmly was that of M. Deviolaine, the Inspector of Forests for the district of Villers-Cotterets. M. Deviolaine, a cousin to Dumas by marriage, possessed an imposing house containing suites of rooms. There were also stables and coach houses. Best of all, this habitation opened upon a fine park and in this park the boy loved to wander. It was a park of historical memories, for it had been planted by François I. Under its huge trees François had lain beside Madame d'Étampes, and Henri II had wandered with Diane de Poitiers and Henri IV had kissed his Gabrielle. The tall beeches and oaks, later to be hewn down by

order of Louis-Philippe, were filled with whispering voices. Here the boy strolled aimlessly through the flickering sunshine or reclined in the long wind-blown grass, his nostrils dilated with the sweet smell of summer, and listened to the myriads of birds that tilted upon the branches and sang to the day. And in the strange twilight he saw lovely phantoms gliding between the venerable trunks of the trees. It was upon the bark of one of these trees that the Villers-Cotterets poet, Demoustier, wrote:

*Ce bois fut l'asile chéri*
*De l'amour autrefois fidèle;*
*Tout l'y rappelle encore, et le cœur attendri*
*Soupire en se disant: C'est ici que Henri*
*Soupirait près de Gabrielle.*

M. Deviolaine, through whose house the boy made his way into this lovely park, was to play some part in Dumas's future life. He was a medium-sized man with small black eyes shaded by enormous eyebrows. His lips protruded; his frame was the frame of Hercules; he was covered with hair like a boar; and his temper resembled the temper of that fierce creature. The wild storms of rage that constantly overcame him were the terror of his family, and women, children, and servants fled from it with heads lowered as though they were fleeing a storm. Only once in his life did Dumas hear him speak without swearing. In spite of this fury he never struck anybody. He was careful to kick at his dog when it was well out of reach of his foot. The boy was in abject fear of this ceaseless volcano of a man; yet he loved him, and perhaps understood that beneath his crusty demeanor M. Deviolaine, also, had his share of love for young Alexandre.

Besides the house facing the park M. Deviolaine owned another called St. Remy. It stood in a little plateau entirely surrounded by forest and had once been a nunnery, the cloistered life there being abolished about 1791. Attached to this house was an immense cloister with great staircases outside it, and here on Sundays Alexandre played with other children, racing through large rooms where pallid-faced nuns had once wept for the sins of the world. It was in the gardens

of this cloister that the boy was once startled by seeing two snakes engaging in a mortal combat, weaving about one another and darting forth their malicious forked tongues.

About three leagues from Villers-Cotterets lived M. Collard in his delightful château, Villers-Hellon, and here, too, Alexandre was a welcome visitor. M. Collard was of aristocratic descent. His name had once been M. Collard de Montjouy, but he had lopped off the noble estate name in order not to offend democratic ears. M. Collard had known M. de Talleyrand, and his wife was the illegitimate daughter of Philippe-Égalité and Madame de Genlis. There was an aura of nobility, therefore, about his château. As he was the legal guardian of Alexandre the boy went there often, preferring Villers-Hellon to either Madame Darcourt's house, where there was a Buffon but no garden, or M. Deviolaine's larger dwelling, where there was a lovely park but also a scowling face. M. Collard had a great garden, a smiling face and gentle manners, and a splendidly illustrated Bible.

It was at Villers-Hellon one evening that Alexandre received a shock. He was seated turning over the pages in the illustrated Bible when he heard a carriage draw up at the gate and, shortly after, loud shrieks in the dining room. Rushing in with the others he saw what appeared to be an old witch, a sort of Meg Merrilies dressed in black and with a mass of false hair flying in all directions. Beneath this disarranged wig straggled limp gray locks. The old woman's face was pallid and her eyes glazed with horror. Alexandre flung the Bible on the floor and fled for the top regions of the château as fast as his small legs could carry him, dove into bed, clothes, shoes and all, and hauled the blankets over his head. The next day he learned that the witch was the illustrious Madame de Genlis who had lost her road in the forest and given way to a paroxysm of hysterical fear.

By the time Alexandre was six years old and no larger than a jack-boot he could read and write with celerity. Buffon had given place to the Bible; the Bible had abdicated to *Robinson Crusoe;* Defoe's masterpiece had faded away before the *Arabian Nights*; the thousand and one tales from the East had folded up their tents and vanished at the appearance of Demoustier's *Lettres à Émilie sur la Mythologie* and an illustrated *Mythologie de la Jeunesse.* The child

devoured these last two volumes, and there was not a god or goddess or demigod or hero he could not immediately identify. Hercules and his twelve labors, Jupiter and his twenty transformations, Vulcan and his thirty-six misfortunes, Paris and his golden apple, all of these miraculous situations were visible and familiar to the imaginative child. It is important to know that he entered the land of romance through the exotic *Arabian Nights* and the Greek myths where gods put on the jealousies of mortals. Their influence lasted with him through life. He was drawing analogies continually from the myths, and what was the cave of Monte Cristo but another Ali Baba's cavern? Who is the Jean Robert of *Les Mohicans de Paris* but another Haroun Al Raschid wandering through a new Baghdad called Paris?

The boy developed a sense of humor at an early age. There is, for example, the story of Madame Pivert, that elderly damsel and devotee of the bright little boy, who listened spellbound to his recitals. Alexandre gave her an imperfect copy of the *Arabian Nights,* containing only the story of Aladdin. The old lady was enchanted, and returning the volume, asked for the second. Alexandre gave her the same book again, which she reread with renewed interest. This lasted about a year, and during that period Madame Pivert read the tale of Aladdin some fifty-two times. The boy asked her if the *Thousand and One Nights* still entertained her. "Immensely, my small friend," she replied. "But one thing puzzles me." "And that is . . . ?" "Why are they all called Aladdin?"

Madame Dumas grew uneasy. Though Alexandre was still in his little cotton jacket she felt that it was time for him to set about a serious education. Romantic books were well enough in their way but they did not prepare a penniless child for the business of life. Alexandre could write now; his mother and Aimée-Alexandrine, during her summer vacation of six weeks from the Parisian school, had taught him; but more was to be desired. Aimée-Alexandrine, for example, was a good musician and could sing quite prettily. Why should not Alexandre cultivate the music that was in him? No sooner was the thought awakened than action was taken. Villers-Cotterets boasted but one teacher of music, so there was no difficulty about that. His name was Hiraux. Tall and skinny, with an emaci-

ated and parchment-like face beneath a wig that came off every time he doffed his hat, wearing a maroon-colored coat, he resembled a figure out of the tales of Hoffmann. He came with his violin and for three years Alexandre sawed away at it, to the everlasting horror of Madame Darcourt next door. At the end of that time the boy could not even tune the instrument. Hiraux explained to Madame Dumas that it was like stealing money to take any fee for attempting to make a musician out of the boy. Alexandre's musical career ended forthwith.

He turned with relief from the violin to the sword. The old castle of the Duc d'Orléans, near Villers-Cotterets, had been turned into a workhouse during the Empire and here the boy found an old fencing master, one Mounier. Mounier had been run through the mouth by the foil of a pupil, and the sharp point had destroyed his uvula. This accident, which had reduced him to an almost unintelligible gibberer, had ruined his career as a fencing master. Mounier also possessed a gargantuan affection for the bottle. These detrimental qualities in a master of fence did not retard the enthusiasm of Alexandre, who, having reached the age of ten, was properly warlike, and he managed to glean a smattering of fencing knowledge and some skill from old Mounier.

During this period the boy was growing rapidly and his physical development was proceeding happily enough. In after years he stated that at the age of ten he could throw stones like David, draw a bow like a Balearic archer and ride like a Numidian. He could never climb trees or steeples. The horror of high places made him ill, and this fear, a form of vertigo, lasted all his life. Once, years later, when he climbed to the top of the towers of Notre Dame with Victor Hugo, he was washed in the cold perspiration of nervous fear.

Madame Dumas, remarking the growth of her son and realizing that he was ten years old, renewed her anxiety as to his mental education. The violin was a rank failure and fencing would hardly get him very far. There were other things to think of, mathematics, languages, and physics. She cast about for a means of educating the boy. She thought of the colleges endowed for the education of the sons of superior officers. These were applied to but without any favorable result. No one was going to push forward the child of a

general who had incurred the enmity of the Emperor. About this time the Abbé Conseil, who had placed Aimée-Alexandrine in school at Paris, died. He was a cousin to the Dumas family, although he had shown them scant hospitality during his lifetime. Dying, he made slight amends by leaving Madame Dumas fifteen hundred francs, and to one of his relatives, that one to be nominated, he left a bursary at the Seminary of Soissons. Madame Dumas drew a long breath of relief. Alexandre's future was settled. He was to be a priest. The boy broke into wild protests at the thought and resisted for two or three months, his mother pleading all the time. At length, wearied with the struggle, he acquiesced. He would be a priest and God help the Church!

The day before that on which he was to travel to the Seminary at Soissons he collected his few belongings, discovering as he wrapped the meager bundle that he possessed no inkwell. He conceived a luxurious idea. He would treat himself to a horn inkstand with a place for pens. Pocketing the twelve sous which his mother gave him for the precious purchase, he set forth for Devaux, the grocer, who also dealt in inkstands. Devaux was out of inkstands but he promised to have one that evening. It is on threads as slender as this, an inkstand out of stock, for example, that the future of men may hang. When Alexandre returned in the evening he found his cousin, Cécile, a daughter of the ferocious M. Deviolaine, in the shop. She burst into titters at the sight of the boy and promised that as soon as he was ordained she would ask him to be her spiritual director. Alexandre lost his temper, flung the inkstand at the grocer's head, and rushed from the shop. He did not dare to go home, not so much from fear of punishment as from a dislike of witnessing his mother's anguish. He expended the twelve sous for a huge loaf of bread and the greasiest sausage he could find and fled to the forest, where for three days he lived in the hut of one Boudoux, a bird catcher. He occupied his time snaring birds and watching tobacco drool from the unshaven chin of Boudoux.

When Alexandre returned, he returned as do all prodigal sons who are in the wrong—to the arms of a weeping and forgiving mother. No mention was made of the hated Seminary at Soissons and when, some months later, a powder magazine blew up at Soissons and

destroyed the Seminary, killing nine or ten students, Alexandre congratulated himself on his defalcation from the Church as though it had been a bit of prophetical foresight. In the meantime the question of his education was broached again. This time it was decided that he should attend the "college" of the Abbé Grégoire in Villers-Cotterets. It was a far drop from an Imperial lycée or a seminary to a mere day school in a village, but it was the best that Madame Dumas could do, and of course it pleased the boy, for it meant that he should still have his beloved forest about him and that he should hardly change the tenor of his life. The Abbé Grégoire was that gentle, kind-hearted type of churchman that once existed in small French towns. With black soutanes flapping about their legs they pass along the yellow roads nodding and smiling to the tanned workers, who doff their hats to the greeting. Alexandre worshiped the Abbé Grégoire from the moment he saw him, and passed a fairly happy period of formal education in the small school of twenty to twenty-five students which was so proudly denominated a "college." The days when he was free from the rise of the sun to the rise of the moon were no more, but he still had his Sundays and holidays wherein to hunt and visit friends and relatives, and his evenings in which to wander through the quiet lanes of the countryside. He was growing rapidly and though the conceit of youth awoke antagonists among his comrades he was, on the whole, a charming boy. His impudence was the result of his vitality; his vanity and overbearing qualities were induced by the memory of his father; his admiration for himself was the flaw of an only son.

1814. Before her shop in the Place de la Fontaine the wife of the gunsmith, Montagnon, sat and sang:

*"Le Corse de Madame Ango*
*N'est pas le Corse de la Corse,*
*Car le Corse de Marengo*
*Est d'une bien plus dure écorce."*

There was a constant agitation in the streets of Villers-Cotterets. Conflicting rumors permeated the town and uncertainty hovered in

the air. Napoleon was fighting with his back against the wall. The Allied Coalition had invaded French soil, and confidence in the Emperor had dissipated. Destiny had ceased to speak to the Corsican. The month of January had been momentous in its consequences. Columns of troops under foreign flags swept through the pleasant valleys of France, besieging towns and driving a scattered defense before them. Colmar. Besançon. Dole. Landau. Forbach. Chalon-sur-Saône. Murat, King of Naples, flung honor to the wind, and, short-sighted opportunist, sought to preserve his crown by making a disgraceful peace with Austria and England. On the twenty-fifth of the month the Emperor left Paris and rejoined the army. He immediately took up the offensive and Paris breathed easier. The undefeatable would continue undefeatable. On the first of February the Battle of La Rothière was fought and Napoleon was stopped in his tracks. Toward the end of March the Allies were closing about Paris and on the thirty-first of that month they entered the city. On April 4 at Fontainebleau the Emperor abdicated in favor of his son, the King of Rome. The next day Chateaubriand's pamphlet, *Bonaparte et les Bourbons,* appeared. On the twenty-ninth of the month Louis XVIII was at Compiègne. The third of May witnessed the entry of the King into his loyal and royal city of Paris.

During this period of the demolition of an Empire, Villers-Cotterets, on the fringe of the field of action, experienced its vicissitudes. As the fighting crept closer, at Château-Thierry, at Nogent, then at Laon, the villagers hastened to bury their valuables in secret places, for they had heard of the thievery of the Allies. Most of all they feared the terrible Cossacks, those men in round high hats of fur and with curved swords. They rode their horses like madmen, it was rumored, and fire and slaughter and rapine were the demons that rode with them. At Bucy-le-Long they had roasted the legs of a servant; at Nogent they tore a cloth merchant to pieces; at Provins they threw a baby in the fire; and at Soissons they burned fifty houses, smashed all the pumps, and cut down the fleeing natives with saber and bayonet. Madame Dumas placed all her linen, furniture, and mattresses in a cellar beneath the house, a cellar reached by a trapdoor, and then she had the floor relaid. Thirty louis, her sole possession of money, she deposited in a leather bag and buried it in

the garden. Fleeing soldiers from Soissons dashed by the house, the hoofs of their horses drumming madly on the dirt road. Madame Dumas heard the sound of hoofs and cooked an enormous haricot of mutton, for she had heard that if Cossacks were properly fed they were apt to prove harmless. She also reserved her bin of Soissons wine for them. After three days of hanging over the fire and three days lying in the bin the haricot was eaten and the wine of Soissons was drunk by French troopers of Maréchal Mortier's corps. Alexandre in after years remembered the bent weary form of that exhausted maréchal as he rode through the village.

Days passed. Whenever two or three mounted men were descried entering the village the awful cry, "The Cossacks! The Cossacks!" went up, and men, women, and children fled to the subterranean quarries in the fields beyond Villers-Cotterets. Madame Dumas set to work and cooked another huge haricot. Her hands shook as she labored. The only calm person in the village was the Abbé Grégoire, who proceeded from house to house in his trailing black robe and pointed out that evil comes only from evil and that if no ill were offered the Cossacks they would return no ill. Rumors of fighting continued. Battles everywhere. Mormant. Montmirail. Montereau. Soissons. Troyes. Bar-sur-Aube. Meaux. La Fère. And then one foggy February morning the Cossacks did come, fifteen long-bearded men with slant eyes and with tall lances, riding furiously through the rue de Soissons. They disappeared in the mist and the startled villagers crept dubiously forth from their hiding places. In the open doorway of one of the houses on the rue de Soissons a woman stood wringing her hands and screaming. Alexandre among others ran toward her. She was the wife of a hosier named Ducoudray, and M. Ducoudray at that moment was lying just inside the door of his house with torrents of blood flowing from his throat. He had been standing behind the barred door when the Cossacks had passed and had suddenly fallen with a choked cry. One of the riders had discharged his pistol at the door and the ball had torn through the planking and hit M. Ducoudray in the throat, severing an artery and breaking his spine.

Madame Dumas decided that neither haricot mutton nor wine of Soissons were safe shields against Cossacks and she fled for the

quarries dragging her son behind her. From the quarries they went to the farm of a Madame Picot, and there during a five or six days' stay they learned of the battles of Lizy, of St. Julien, and of Bar-sur-Seine. One morning they distinctly heard the roar of cannon. Fighting was in progress at Neuilly-Saint-Front. It was too near, and the harried woman, still haunted by the fear of ferocious Cossacks, determined to remove her son still farther from the disputed territory.

Mademoiselle Adélaïde, an ancient, hunchbacked spinster possessing some thousands of francs income, decided that life in Villers-Cotterets was a little too much for her nerves. The noise disturbed her and she could not sleep because she was terrified of the Cossacks, who had great ugly beards and were reputed to be rather careless of the sanctity of womanhood. She shook her hunch and made up her mind to hire a cart and drive to Paris in it. Madame Dumas, learning of this, went to her, and an arrangement was made by which Mademoiselle Adélaïde, a clerk named Cretet, Madame Dumas and Alexandre should all travel to Paris in the same cart. The thirty louis were dug up from the garden, Alexandre was dressed in a new cotton frock, and off they started. The first night found them as far as Nanteuil. The second night they reached Mesnil. Here the quartet seemed settled for the time being. Alexandre was disgusted. He had set his heart on seeing Paris, that legendary city where he had been kissed by the Marquise de Montesson and had ridden on Brune's sword while wearing Murat's plumed hat. Mademoiselle Adélaïde came to his aid, for she had heard that there was to be a great review of the National Guard in Paris on the twenty-seventh of the month. The idea of witnessing this spectacle appealed to her. So on the twenty-seventh, without his mother who refused to come, but with Mademoiselle Adélaïde and Cretet, Alexandre heard the flourish of trumpets, saw the waving of trooped colors, and witnessed a small rosy child of three being lifted high above the heads of fifty thousand National Guardsmen while a hundred thousand voices roared, *"Vive le roi de Rome!"* In this way the son of General Dumas saw the son of General Bonaparte.

Back at Mesnil fear again beset the fugitives. The enemy was at Meaux and the advance guard had been seen as far as Bondy. Mesnil, then, was in the line of attack. Back toward Villers-Cotterets started

Madame Dumas and her son, this time without Mademoiselle Adélaïde and Cretet, who appear to have vanished into thin air. When they reached Nanteuil they learned that the enemy was at Villers-Cotterets, so taking a side road they went on to Crespy. There they stopped with a Madame Millet. All around them, at Compiègne, at Villers-Cotterets, at Levignan, lay the enemy, but by some curious chance Crespy was inviolate.

The village did not remain safe for long, however. One day the short blue coats of the Prussian cavalry were seen advancing through the trees. Alexandre from the attic window of Madame Millet's house saw these foreigners in small visored helmets with leather chin-straps riding behind their trumpeters, heard the shock as they met the advance of the French cavalry, and saw the hurricane of dust, smoke, and clashing steel as the two commands engaged in combat in the street. Clutching the window sash while bullets spattered against the house and the terrified women fled to cellars, Alexandre's eyes dilated at the sight of men being hewn down from their saddles by tremendous saber blows. He saw the commands surge back and forth, now the Prussians in the ascendant and then the French, and witnessed the disappearance of these ferocious blood-stained men, still fighting, into the distance beyond the village. A dead silence followed this spectacle. Then the women crept forth and administered to the gasping forms that cried from the dust of the road. The episode seemed like some black dream to the boy. He shook convulsively as he held the basin of water beside some ensanguined trooper while his mother washed the blood from the wound.

Days of waiting followed. A fortnight after this struggle in the streets of Crespy Madame Dumas and her son returned to Villers-Cotterets. In that fortnight the face of Europe had changed. Napoleon had lost France, abdicated, tried to poison himself, been exiled to Elba, and Louis XVIII had been placed upon the throne.

## II

Between the abdication at Fontainebleau and the landing of Bonaparte at Golfe Juan stretched a period of eleven months. During this time Villers-Cotterets underwent several changes, some of which

affected Alexandre and his mother. The town, which had been half-heartedly Imperial during the reign of Napoleon, became wholeheartedly Royalist under Louis XVIII. A part of the demesne of the old Ducs d'Orléans, it was permeated with loyalists to the Bourbons; it had, like so many small towns away from the Jacobin excitements of the large cities, an essentially conservative core, and drained as it had been by the drafts of the Empire, it welcomed an era that signified peace and the renewal of old traditions. There was no Vendôme Column to thrill the villagers, but there was a great park filled with memories of vanished kings and queens. Dumas and his mother, as Bonapartists, suffered some uneasiness during this period. They were not, in the actual sense of the word, Bonapartists, but General Dumas had fought under Napoleon, and the townsfolk, recalling the sturdy General and his Republican opinions, confused him with the era that had superimposed itself upon the Revolutionary decade. They remembered, first of all, that Dumas had been anti-Royalist, and that was enough for them. There were, therefore, some vague gibes and reproaches flung at Madame Dumas and her thirteen-year-old son. They were not serious, but they were sufficient to discompose the timorous widow. At the same time, Madame Dumas had her friends, M. Collard of Villers-Hellon among them. He it was who traveled to Paris after the Restoration and procured for Madame Dumas a license to open and conduct a *bureau de tabac* in Villers-Cotterets. It was a far drop for the widow of the Horatius Cocles of the Tyrol, but necessity proved stronger than pride. Madame Dumas swallowed her pride and opened her little shop.

The Restoration had also changed the mode of Alexandre's education. The good Abbé Grégoire had lost his certificate as master of the little "college" and he was not permitted to teach in his own home. He was, however, allowed to visit the homes of students and oversee their educations there. So, for the sum of six francs a month, he came to the Dumas home—mother and son were again living in the rue de Lormet near the house where Alexandre had been born—and taught the boy Latin. With the aid of a "crib" Alexandre translated quite satisfactorily from Virgil and Tacitus. From Oblet, the town schoolmaster, the boy received instruction in arithmetic and handwriting. Arithmetic proved to be Alexandre's Waterloo; he was unable to pro-

ceed beyond the simplest sums in multiplication. But handwriting was another matter. Here was something that appealed to him, and within three months he could write an elegant script. The hand of Destiny was at work here, but Alexandre was quite unconscious of the fact that this predilection for the quill pen was to stand him in good stead, to be his only hope, in fact, when he ventured upon Paris as helpless as Dick Whittington when he ventured on London. Together with the Latin, the arithmetic, and the handwriting went his lessons in fencing with old Mounier. There was horseback riding and gunning in the woods. This education, then, was not an education that could produce a youth in any sense of the word cultured; it was no more than a rough-and-ready smattering. It was life itself that would have to educate Dumas; the city of Paris was to be his schoolbook and the ambitions and suggestions of his friends were to be his mentors.

Time passed. Alexandre made his first communion dressed in a cambric shirt, a white necktie, nankeen trousers, a white quilted waistcoat, a blue coat with metal buttons, and carrying a wax candle that weighed two pounds. He was more interested in a pretty child named Laure with reddish hair than he was in the ceremony. Yet the excitement of religious emotion overcame him for a day or two. The Abbé Grégoire, full of wisdom and common sense, remarked, "I would rather your feelings were less intense, and that they would last longer." Dumas's religious emotions were always a matter of spontaneous sentimental combustion, so to speak, and his first communion was his last. Yet he loved to make occasional oratorical flourishes about the good God and he generally managed to move himself to tears, if no one else. His religion was the religion of the sensitive literary man who intoxicates himself with imaginative emotions. It was also the religion of the Negro.

About this time Alexandre met a young man named Auguste Lafarge, the son of the coppersmith in whose house Madame Dumas and her son were living. Auguste lived in Paris and occasionally deigned to visit Villers-Cotterets. When he came it was like the arrival of *le Roi Soleil,* for Auguste was quite up to snuff, to put it mildly, so far as costume went. Clad in a box coat with thirty-six bands on it, a watch chain with massive trinkets, trousers so tight

that they threatened to split incontinently at every step he took, and polished boots *à la hussarde,* he strutted through the village, the very epitome of a young fop. Alexandre looked and his jaw fell. Every drop of his Negro blood yearned for that box coat with the thirty-six bands on it. Those polished boots *à la hussarde* held him spellbound. And what would he not give for a jingling watch chain that seemed to have everything hung on it but the seven Visigoth crowns! Alexandre lost no time in scraping an acquaintance with the lordly Auguste. To hear him speak was but to find enhanced the splendor of this local *le Roi Soleil,* for Auguste knew real literary people; he had talked with Désaugiers, Béranger and Gouffé; and he could write dainty songs. When he drew a gold piece from his pocket and flung it carelessly on the counter for some small purchase of Madame Dumas's tobacco Alexandre must have seen Monte Cristo. It was all wonderful. Alexandre went bird-catching with Auguste and it is strange that the birds did not fly into the country boy's mouth, for the Parisian kept it wide open with tales of the extravagances of Paris. Three days later Auguste, box coat, boots *à la hussarde* and all, returned to Paris, leaving behind him an eight-line epigram on Mademoiselle Picot that was an eight-day sensation in the village. Alexandre went immediately to the Abbé Grégoire and applied for lessons in the construction of French verses. For the first time in his life a nebulous ambition to create was awakened in him. It was but a momentary enthusiasm, however, for by the end of the week Alexandre put aside the *bouts-rimés* that the worthy abbé had given him to complete, picked up his gun, and went out to shoot larks.

On the seventh of March, 1815, the startled mayor of Villers-Cotterets learned from the *Moniteur* that Bonaparte has escaped from the Island of Elba, landed on the coast of France in the Department of Var, and was marching northward by way of Digne and Gap toward Grenoble. During the feverish *Cent-Jours* that followed mother and son kept much to themselves. The angry looks of their Royalist neighbors were like tiny sharp knives flung at them. Battles were fought; the army and the Emperor passed twice through Villers-Cotterets; but the sullen natives watched them go and waited impatiently for the return of the Bourbons. Alexandre's emotions on

beholding the Emperor have already been set forth. The mother was quieter, for she remembered too distinctly the dark-faced General who had been broken by Bonaparte. There was a dusty sword on the wall to recall the past to her. Yet she must be classified as a Bonapartist and, perhaps in her heart of hearts she knew that this was so, that of two evils, Bonaparte and Bourbon, Bonaparte seemed to her the least. It was not so with Villers-Cotterets. The triumphant Royalists witnessed the débâcle of Napoleon's last attempt with a calm pleasure after the momentary shock to their national pride caused by Waterloo, and the town settled back into its usual sleepy existence. As for Alexandre, he picked up his gun again and went looking for larks. This was a much pleasanter pastime than striving to patch up a crumbled Empire. Humpty Dumpty could never be put back on the wall again.

Early in 1818 Alexandre became a man of business. Madame Dumas, uneasy for her son's future, observing that he did nothing but hunt in the woods with forest rangers and gamekeepers, crossed the square from her house one morning and called on Maître Mennesson, her solicitor. Maître Mennesson, a sturdy, red-haired, sharp-eyed, teasing-mouthed man of thirty-five received her with a smile. He suspected her purpose. Having failed miserably to transform her son into a priest, she had decided to make a lawyer of him. Very well. Maître Mennesson was accommodating. He would take the boy into his office as third clerk, which was tantamount to saying he could sharpen quill pens, fill the inkwells, and put away the ledgers. "Unless I am greatly mistaken," he remarked, "Alexandre cares too much for *la marette, la pipée,* and hunting ever to become an assiduous pupil of Cujas and Pothier." *La marette* was a method of lime-twigging birds along forest pools or *mares*; *la pipée* was catching them in the same way by inserting the twigs coated with birdlime in the top branches of trees. Maître Mennesson, who had read Voltaire and become a Republican before Republicans existed, was an astute man. It was not for nothing that he had committed the most impious and licentious passages of *La Pucelle* to memory and would recite them after dinner, accompanying the recitation with

a sly smile. Every small town has its atheist; it is generally the lawyer.

Alexandre did care too much for *la marette* and *la pipée,* but he went to work in Maître Mennesson's office, nevertheless. It gave him some pain to be shut up a greater part of the day, but he recalled that Auguste Lafarge had started in the same way and that Auguste possessed a box coat with thirty-six bands on it. Without too much protest, then, the young man settled himself to sharpen quill pens and fill inkwells. Maître Mennesson did not prove a hard master, and the two clerks, Niguet and Cousin, were pleasant enough. Alexandre discovered that he was not to be shut up too tightly after all, for part of his duties was to carry deeds to various houses in the neighborhood for signature. If it were not in season he would go at night and set bird snares along the pools on his route. Time passed in this way and the office was occasionally enlivened when some unsuspecting visitor would inadvertently say a good word for the priests or praise the Bourbons. Then Maître Mennesson's malicious little eyes would sharpen and he would take down an Old Testament or a history of France, open it, and offer the most ribald comments.

The month of May came. Now May is a fatal month to impressionable youths of sixteen, and Alexandre would be sixteen in two months. He fell in love, and like all young men in love for the first time, he made the veriest booby of himself. The Whitsuntide festival was at its height in Villers-Cotterets and the great park was filled with laughing people from Ferté-Milon, Crespy, Soissons, Château-Thierry, Compiègne, even from Paris, people who were in holiday attire and who drank deeply, danced madly, and laughed uproariously. Among the visitors were two young girls, one a niece of the Abbé Grégoire named Laurence and the other her friend, a young woman of Spanish extraction called Vittoria. Alexandre, who had boasted of his dancing abilities, had been appointed cavalier to the two young women by the worthy abbé. He determined to fill his office in proper style, read the *Aventures du Chevalier Faublas* to learn the sophisticated attitude toward young women, put on his first communion costume of white nankeen breeches and blue coat, and strutted off to the festival looking like the caricature of an old man of the previous era. Mademoiselle Laurence was tall and willowy and Mademoiselle Vittoria was pale

and stout. Alexandre, proudly ignoring the remarks of his comrades about his skinny calves, fell in love twice. While he was walking beside the tall, thin Mademoiselle Laurence a certain M. Miaud, a young Parisian employed at the castle, lifted his eyeglass and gazed in wonder at Alexandre. "Ah! Ah!" he said. "There is Dumas going to his first communion again, only he has changed his taper." The young ladies tittered and Alexandre flushed. He began to realize that a first communion costume of 1816 was really not the height of fashion for a young buck of 1818. He decided to redeem himself by a feat of strength, and when the trio came to a wolf leap popularly known as the Haha he announced that he could jump it. The young ladies murmured something to the effect of "What of it?" but the enamored youth, ignoring this lukewarm urge, drew himself up and by a tremendous effort shot across the chasm. The minute he landed there was a loud ominous rip and the seat of his white nankeen breeches split apart as though they had been struck by a bolt of lightning. This stroke was decisive. Alexandre dashed for home, leaving the stunned maidens behind him. Madame Dumas sewed up the rent and Alexandre, refreshing himself with a huge glass of cider, returned to the festival. The first person he saw was the obnoxious Miaud. "Ah!" murmured that young gentleman to himself. "See what it is to wear breeches." He passed, shaking his head sadly, and Alexandre glared after him like a wild boar. Nothing went right after this. The youth discovered that he had forgotten his gloves and was forced to borrow a pair from an obliging friend, not, it may be said, M. Miaud. He made the fatal mistake of telling Mademoiselle Vittoria that he had learned to dance with a chair for a partner. His stumbling self-consciousness, his countrified manners, his entire ignorance of the small artificialities of social intercourse, all these things militated against his success with the young women who had been accustomed to the easy frivolities of Paris. A day or two later Alexandre received a note from Mademoiselle Laurence in which she relieved him of further responsibility as an escort, explaining that M. Miaud would perform that happy office, and advising the youth to return to his young playmates who were waiting for him to resume his position at prisoner's base. The result of this episode on Alexandre's life was tremendous; for the first time he

became aware of his social deficiencies; he saw himself as a ridiculous young bumpkin; and he determined to change. The day that he leaped across the Haha he ceased to be a boy. That chasm was his Rubicon. Once on the other side he saw a world of women and social elegancies and understood, at first vaguely, perhaps, how far and how difficult the road was which he would have to travel. The days of carefree bird snaring and childish pursuits were over and an ambition to understand and enter the great world of polite affairs was planted in his lathlike frame.

He became quieter and a brooding look crept into his eyes. When a boy changes to a man and the passions of a man flood him like a fiery bath he enters a new world that is alternately horrible and filled with unearthly beauty. The girls with whom he has played cease to be children and take on the aspect of women. A strangeness like a veil rises between him and the unconscious spontaneities of boyhood. Rounded bosoms and slender waists and lithe brown calves become perceptible where they had never seemed to exist before. It was so with Alexandre. He began to observe the young girls of Villers-Cotterets. There were the Troisvallet sisters, Clémentine, dark and with flowing black hair, and Henriette, tall and rosy and pliant as a willow tree. There were Sophie and Pélagie Perrot, Louise Moreau, Éléanore Picot, Augustine Deviolaine, Louise Collard, Joséphine and Manette Thierry, Louise Brézette, Albine Hardi, and Adèle Dalvin. A garden of girls suddenly bloomed before him, slender, charming, wide-eyed and laughing, running through the meadows on summer days with their pink and blue sashes fluttering behind them, their tiny bonnets at coquettish angles, their pale arms interlaced. He had not seen these girls before Mademoiselle Laurence and Mademoiselle Vittoria came to Villers-Cotterets and awoke him abruptly to the fact of his clumsy boyhood. They had merely been figures moving through his ordinary world; now they took on the aspects of a summer garden, a springtide crown of stars and flowers. He drew himself to his full height, played no longer with children, told anyone who asked that he was seventeen years old, and brushed his hair and boots every morning. One girl among this bevy stood out in bright relief. She was fair and pink-complexioned and had golden hair and sweet eyes and a charming smile. She was short

rather than tall, plump rather than thin. She was something between a Watteau shepherdess and one of Greuze's peasant girls. Her name was Adèle Dalvin and she was employed in a milliner's shop. Before the summer was over Alexandre possessed a sweetheart and there began in his bosom that delicious struggle of love which asks unceasingly and is never discouraged, that seeks for favor after favor and finds the least of them a heaven in itself, that is restless with the restlessness of youth and that is almost as brief as the summer itself.

If the fact of a regular position with Maître Mennesson awakened Alexandre to the responsibilities of livelihood and if the coming of Mademoiselle Laurence and Mademoiselle Vittoria revealed to him the abrupt chasm between unthinking boyhood and the desires of a man, there was yet a third episode during this year to teach him the sweet insanity of ambition. It was his meeting with Adolphe de Leuven. Adolphe, son of that Count Adolphe-Louis Ribbing de Leuven, who was one of the three Swedish noblemen inculpated in the murder of Gustavus III, had come with his father for a visit to the Collards at Villers-Hellon, and there, in the company of Caroline Collard, Alexandre first met him. De Leuven, at this time, was between sixteen and seventeen, a tall, dark, and gaunt young man with good eyes, a prominent nose, black hair cut like bristles, and an aristocratic bearing. He was to set afire eternally and for all time that slumbering desire in Alexandre from which Auguste Lafarge had struck so brief a spark. In other words, he was to awaken in young Dumas the desire to create literature, to write plays, to compose poetry.

The two young men met and responded to one another immediately and without reservation. Adolphe was gracious, intelligent, familiar with the Parisian scene; Alexandre was naïve, painfully anxious to please, entirely ignorant of anything outside of Villers-Cotterets, enchanted by Adolphe. It was Adolphe who explained poetry to him; it was he who explained the habits of the water hen to Adolphe. Thus they exchanged the knowledge of the city for the knowledge of the country, the knowledge of Arnault and Ancelot for the knowledge of the wild boar and the soaring larks of the forest. It was an excellent exchange, for both men profited by it and when Adolphe,

his short visit at Villers-Hellon terminated, departed for Paris he left behind him a young man whose breast fostered the most ambitious designs. Alexandre was fully aware of his ignorance at last; he knew that he must study, that he must learn languages, that the cultivation of the mind is more important than expert placing of lime twigs in the branches of high trees. When he had entered the office of Maître Mennesson his education under the Abbé Grégoire had ceased, and indeed what had that given him after all, but the veriest scraps of formal learning, a few tags of Latin, the ability to scan alexandrines? The young man who now divided his time between the errands of Maître Mennesson and rapturous trysts with the blonde Adèle Dalvin, cast about him for a new instructor. It was not long before Alexandre happened upon a certain Amédée de la Ponce, an officer of Hussars who had settled in Villers-Cotterets. Amédée taught him the virtues of hard work, taught him that love and hunting and dancing were well enough in their way but that there was a higher objective for the ambitious young man. He started to teach Alexandre Italian and German, two languages which the young officer spoke with fluency. One of the books from which Alexandre learned Italian was Ugo Foscolo's romance, which he was later to translate into French as the *Dernières Lettres de Jacopo Ortis*. Italian proved easy, for it was a Latin language and akin to Alexandre's nature, but German he found difficult. It was only through the continued prodding and urging of Amédée that the young man kept at it, and even so the tongue of Goethe never became more to Dumas than a readable language, while Italian became a second mother tongue. So hard and well-occupied weeks passed. Adèle loved him but would not succumb to his passionate declarations; Maître Mennesson's office was not too arduous; Niguet had departed and a young man named Paillet, some six or seven years older than Alexandre, had succeeded him; Amédée kept Alexandre's nose to the grindstone of study; de Leuven came back and settled for a brief while in M. Deviolaine's town house; M. Arnault, the famous author of *Germanicus* and *Marius à Minturnes* came to visit de Leuven; Adolphe read his fables and elegies and the young Dumas listened open-mouthed; the sun shone and the rain fell and the days passed. Ambition grew under this regimen. Alexandre's days were divided into three portions: one devoted to

his friendships, another to his love-making, and a third to his legal work. De Leuven finally went back to Paris with M. Arnault and Alexandre was desolate. But he still had his languages and they occupied much of his time. He still had Adèle and that sweet struggle caused the days to pass as swiftly as a current flowing beneath a bridge. The period of boyhood was definitely left behind, and though he was awkward still, though the patent marks of a country upbringing were on him, he revealed a seriousness that promised a greater, if less happy, future than that of a lawyer's clerk in a small town.

It was during this period, while he was studying Dante and Ariosto with Amédée, that Alexandre experienced his first vivid dramatic sensation. An old client of Maître Mennesson left a hundred and fifty francs to be divided among the young men in the office, Alexandre's share being thirty-seven francs and fifty centimes, more money than he had ever possessed in his life. Paillet, the new head clerk, proposed that the money should be clubbed and that all of them should travel to Soissons and sink this unbelievable sum in the delights of the seat of the *sous-préfecture*. The idea appealed; it smacked of a wild adventure; so one morning at the early hour of three-thirty Dumas, Ronsin (the second clerk), and Paillet took seats on the diligence to Paris, the coach rumbled through La Vertefeuille and at six o'clock the three young men found themselves in Soissons. They discovered that a company of pupils from the Conservatoire were giving a special performance of Ducis's version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* that evening. Now Alexandre had never heard of *Hamlet*; he had never heard of Shakespeare; he had never heard of Ducis. It was with some misgivings that he read the word "tragedy" on the placards. His mother had striven to make him read the tragedies of Racine and Corneille but they had bored him. It was, therefore, with expectations of the worst that the young man seated himself in the pit that evening and prepared to sleep through the speeches of the tall, pale, sallow Cudot who was cast as Hamlet. But something happened. Ducis's version could not entirely destroy the effect of Shakespeare's play, and Alexandre, who had expected interminable formal speeches and the grave squeak of buskins, witnessed a tragedy

compact with inexplicable sensations, aimless longings, mysterious rays of light, and sinister prognostications. The ghost scene, Hamlet's struggle with his mother, the monologues, the gloomy questionings of death, all these things moved Alexandre tremendously. A door opened before him into a land which he had heretofore but vaguely suspected. Yet the version of *Hamlet* made by Ducis was, at best, but a foggy outline. Benjamin Robert Haydon, the unfortunate English artist, had seen this arrangement of Shakespeare's masterpiece some years before at Versailles, and of it he had written: "At Versailles we saw Ducis's adaptation of *Hamlet* to the French stage. The innocence and weakness of Ophelia were lost, and Hamlet was a blubbering boy. But when Hamlet was talking to his mother, and fancied for a moment he saw his father's ghost, Talma was terrific; it really shook my orthodoxy. The ghost was not seen—there was really a cause for this stupor—and his talking as if he only saw what we did not, frightened us all. In the next scene Hamlet brings in an urn with his father's ashes—this was thoroughly French; yet when he made his mother swear on the urn that she knew nothing of the murder and touch the ashes, there was an awful silence throughout the house. Ducis has entirely lost that feeling of 'grief which passeth show'—his Hamlet's grief was all show." Alexandre, never having experienced the sublime thrill of the original *Hamlet,* was moved to an unlimited display of delight by the French version. Back in Villers-Cotterets he was like a youth demented. He went about in a semi-trance asking everybody, "Do you know Hamlet? Do you know Ducis?" He even ordered the play from Paris and in three days had the part of Hamlet committed to memory. From this moment he suspected his vocation. Through the veils of his ignorance he sensed the possibilities of a romantic literature that was no longer formal.

Within a few months Adolphe de Leuven returned from Paris. He was full of stories of the glamour of literary life in the capital. Like a good-natured but sly serpent he held forth the rosy apples of promise to that simple Adam of the country, Alexandre, and Alexandre, lulled into an ambitious daydream, listened. Adolphe had been a guest in the house of Arnault. Adolphe had seen Talma, that Napoleon of tragedians, had been in his chambers, had conversed with him,

had met the playwright Scribe there. He had heard Mademoiselle Duchesnois recite *Marie Stuart*. He was acquainted with M. de Jouy, who had finished his *Sylla*; with Lucien Arnault, who had begun his *Régulus;* with Pichat, who was composing his *Brennus* and thinking out his *Léonidas*; with Soulié, who wrote poems for *Le Mercure*; with Rousseau, the author of a hundred and one *vaudevilles*; with Ferdinand Langlé, whose mistress was the little Fleuriet; with Théaulon, who had inscribed these words on the door of his study:

*Loin du sot, du fat et du traître,*
*Ici ma constance attendra:*
*Et l'amour qui viendra peut-être,*
*Et la mort qui du moins viendra!*

This, then, was the world that serpent Adolphe showed Alexandre, a world of music and light and poetry and fame, a world where beautiful actresses kissed their lovers in the *coulisses,* a world where poets met over the café tables and drank deeply and wrote furiously, a world that was crowned with two flowers, the laurel and the immortelle.

A week before Adolphe's return his restricted life in Villers-Cotterets with the eventual possibility of a yearly salary of fifteen or eighteen hundred francs had not seemed too bleak; a week after Adolphe's return everything was changed. Villers-Cotterets was a cage. Maître Mennesson's office was a den. His own home was a hole. Under the kindly tuition of Amédée he began to translate Burger's beautiful ballad, *Lenore,* into French verse. He failed with it miserably, but Adolphe was by his side to suggest other things. Come, they would collaborate on a play. So the son of the baron and the son of the general sat down before a table, sharpened some quill pens, and set to work. Adolphe had read many books, had been well educated, had witnessed the performances of dozens of plays, had discussed technique with successful authors. Alexandre had never opened a volume of Scott or Cooper; he was ignorant of the names of Goethe and Schiller and Uhland and André Chenier; the only decent performance of a play he had ever witnessed had been in Paris when he was three years old; he had read the worst of

Voltaire, the naughty books of Pigault-Lebrun, and the poetry of Demoustier; he had a secondhand acquaintance with Shakespeare through Ducis's variation of *Hamlet*. So this ill-matched couple sat down and turned out a one-act vaudeville called *Le Major de Strasbourg*. They followed this up with a second vaudeville stolen from M. Bouilly's *Contes à ma fille,* which they called *Le dîner d'amis*. The vats of inspiration still filled to overflowing, they turned to Florian's *Gonsalve de Cordoue* and calmly borrowed enough of it to make a stilted drama entitled *Les Abencérages*. The fury with which young men can write is miraculous. The results of this fury are often beyond description. They are too terrible for words. These labors filled the greater part of a year, from 1820 to 1821, and Adolphe departed for Paris, where his father had taken up residence, with his portmanteau bulging with script, and Alexandre waited impatiently summons to the *première* of his first play. A career strewn with roses and bank notes loomed in the immediate future.

During this time a tragedy, great at the time but, as recalled through the mists of the years, no more than the bitter-sweet taste of the first bite into the ruddy apple of disillusionment, befell Alexandre. The blonde Adèle, with whom his liaison had lasted three years, grew meditative. There had been many secret trysts in her little room, trysts to which Alexandre had crept across back fields, leaping fences in the best romantic manner. To excuse this liaison, to apologize for the irregularity of this affair, is unnecessary. It existed and that is all that can be said about it. These passionate imbroglios exist in all small towns, and the victims are generally the more sensitive inhabitants. Alexandre loved Adèle with all the first fervency of youth, and she returned his passion, but with a trembling doubt sometimes casting a cloud upon it. It is possible that she possessed a faculty which Alexandre never possessed, that of rationalizing her love affairs. After all, she was twenty years old and Alexandre was but nineteen. She had her future to think of and Alexandre compromised that future. He, at nineteen, had but barely emerged from the thoughtless insouciance of boyhood; she, at twenty, had been a woman for five years. The future! That blind mysterious figure stood between her and the tall, fair-haired boy. It was with a vague relief, therefore,

that she saw Alexandre depart on a two months' visit to his brother-in-law, Victor Letellier—for Aimée-Alexandrine had taken a husband—at Dreux. She wept, for she understood that a decision must be made during these eight weeks. Alexandre shed a few tears, for he saw the first passionate revelation of his youth fading into Time. Both these young people mingled their tears; they realized they were about to have memories.

Alexandre hunted in the department of Eure-et-Loire for eight weeks, and Adèle's letters dwindled and ceased. A blank wall of silence rose between them. When the disconsolate Nimrod who had killed the legendary three-legged hare of Dreux returned to Villers-Cotterets in September he was greeted by a startling question. "Do you know that Adèle Dalvin is going to be married?" "It is quite likely," he replied. By piecing together stray bits of information he found that she was going to marry a man twice her age who had returned from Spain with a small fortune. Adèle was prudent. He tried to see her, running again across deserted fields at midnight and climbing high fences, but her room was empty and dark. She had hidden herself away from him. During the fifteen days that elapsed before the wedding ceremony Alexandre kept to his house, strange, silent, moody, devoured by a first acute anguish. The day of the wedding he fled to the woods, walking blindly through the green trees and placing his lime twigs with a despairing automatic gesture. The caught bird does not fly again. The forsaken lover had lost his first wings. He was as young as this, as naïve, as sure of the lasting misery of his grief as all young men are. In the twilight, the day's end when the blackbird whistles and the first shadows rise about the boles of the trees, he sat in the dim hunter's hut and sliced his loaf of dark bread and poured his ruby-red wine. He raised his head and listened. The high cry of a violin pierced his gloom, and following that shrill sound came mingled voices of young men and women in laughter. He thrust his head out of the hut, peered through the trees, and saw some distance from him young girls in white dresses, youths in bright blue coats, large bouquets and streaming ribbons. And leading them all . . . He withdrew his head with a despairing cry. She had even followed him into the forest. He did not stop to realize that the wedding party was cutting home by a short way through the

wood from Adèle's aunt's house at Haramount. What he had fled from had come to find him out. He peered out again, mercifully screened by the trees, and saw her pass in her white veil and bearing her bouquet of orange blossoms. The violin died in the distance and the soft dark came down over the tall brooding trees, the sleeping birds, the still pools. Alexandre sat in the hunter's hut, his chin on his hand, his elbow on his knee, and winked back the tears. His first dream had exploded like a bubble; his first illusion had been shattered.

Letters began to come from Adolphe. Mother Colombe tottered to the door of the house and handed Alexandre the first epistle with the magic postmark of Paris. He tore it open with trembling hands. The directors of the theaters—and Adolphe could not fathom why—were not making any particular fuss over the three collaborations. However, it was not yet time to despair. The trio of masterpieces would have their hearings yet. The second letter was a month in coming. *Le dîner d'amis,* borrowed from Bouilly, did not have sufficient plot; *Le Major de Strasbourg* was too much like *Le soldat laboureur,* which had just been played at the Variétés; *Les Abencérages* was quite hopeless because every boulevard theater for the past twenty years had received a play on that hackneyed subject. The Gymnase, the Variétés, the Porte-Saint-Martin, the Ambigu-Comique, the Gaieté, all the large theaters had been approached and all of them had curtly refused the three scripts. Where were all those roses and bank notes now? Where were the laurels and the immortelles? Alexandre shed as bitter a tear as Boabdil did over Granada and returned gloomily to work.

The woes of youth do not last long, and Alexandre was well on the road to recovery both from Adèle Dalvin and the fate of his first three plays when he left Maître Mennesson's office and went into residence as second or third clerk with M. Lefèvre, a lawyer of Crespy. Crespy was three and a half leagues from Villers-Cotterets, and now for the first time Alexandre found himself pretty much on his own, although on Saturdays he could if he wished return home for the week-end. M. Lefèvre was a good-looking man of thirty-five whose physique had been weakened by the pleasures, both permissible and

forbidden, of Paris, to which city he went eight or ten times a year, driving there in a private conveyance and with a postilion who wore a powdered wig, a blue jacket with red lapels and silver buttons, and glittering boots. The society of Crespy was agreeable. Victor Letellier's mother lived there and proved an open sesame to Alexandre. Also there was a young lady with bright eyes named Athénaïs. Alexandre discovered that he was not going to have such a bad time after all. By the time he had been there three months he had forgotten all his griefs, written a bad imitation of the *Lettres à Émilie* by Demoustier, sent it to Adolphe who promptly lost it, and basked as often as he could in the bright glances of Athénaïs.

His old friend, Paillet, called on him one day and as they were wandering about the ramparts of the ancient twelfth century tower of Vez, Alexandre was seized with a daring thought. He struck his forehead with a determined fist and exclaimed, "Let us go and spend three days in Paris!" Paillet looked at the sun and then at Alexandre's forehead apprehensively; Alexandre seemed sane enough; it could not be a stroke, then. "What about the office?" inquired the older man. Alexandre said that M. Lefèvre was leaving on one of his trips on the morrow, that he always stayed away two or three days, and that they could go and return in that time. "Money?" said the practical Paillet. He had twenty-eight francs. Alexandre had seven. But Alexandre had an idea as well. They would take Paillet's horse and their guns, one would walk and hunt while the other rode, they would live on the game, the poacher apprehended by a keeper would leap on the horse and dash away, and they would pay their reckoning in Paris with the partridges and quail they brought with them. Paillet succumbed. He desired to observe the pleasures of Paris. As for Alexandre, he wanted to see Adolphe and inquire about the three plays. That night they started.

Two days later, Alexandre on foot and Paillet on horseback, they arrived in the courtyard of the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins in the rue des Vieux-Augustins, Paris, laden with four hares, a dozen partridges, and two quail. Alexandre had not been in Paris since the momentous year 1814, when he had seen the King of Rome lifted above the heads of the National Guard. It was, therefore, like an entrance into dreamland. The serried ranks of houses, the animation of the streets, the

swinging oil lamps, the late cabriolets (for it was night when he arrived), the boys running with flaring torches, the gigantic suspiration of a great city breathing all about him, the noise, and the fever of expectation kept him from sleeping. He tossed about all that night in the bed for which he had paid his partridges.

Early in the morning the friends parted, Paillet on business of his own, and Alexandre to Adolphe de Leuven's house in the rue Pigale. Passing by the Théâtre-Français he noticed that M. de Jouy's *Sylla* was to be played that evening with Talma in the title rôle and he determined to go. Rousing Adolphe from his bed (for like most of the young gentlemen in Paris Adolphe loved to sleep late in the morning), Alexandre acquainted his friend with his quivering desire to see Talma. Nothing was easier. Adolphe had an entrée to the famous actor's house and off they proceeded to the rue de la Tour-des-Dames where, next to the houses of Mademoiselle Mars and Mademoiselle Duchesnois, Talma lived. He was washing his chest when the young men entered, and, after briefly acknowledging the son of General Dumas, he hastily wrote out an order for two seats and then graciously rid himself of his early visitors.

Alexandre, after lunching with de Leuven and arranging to meet him at seven o'clock that evening at the Café du Roi, corner of the rue de Richelieu and the rue Saint Honoré, became the country tourist. He went through the Tuileries by the gate of the rue de la Paix; he passed under the Arch; he wandered up and down the quais; he tramped through the Jardin des Plantes; he exhausted the Musée; he examined Notre Dame inside and out; he forced his way through the gate of the Luxembourg; he peeped in windows and stared after pedestrians; he listened open-mouthed to street hawkers and paused before the platforms of the *saltimbanques;* he watched the boats glide down the yellow Seine; he circled the Palais-Royal. The color, the medley, the movement, the unending landmarks and historical monuments enchanted him. At six o'clock he was back in the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins dining with Paillet on a *filet* with olives and roast beef. At seven o'clock he was seated in the Café du Roi waiting for Adolphe. Paillet had disappeared, possibly after some of the plump young women who spotted the moving horde of people.

Dumas was gazing about him when he was approached by a seedy

TALMA

*The great actor blessed Dumas when the young man first came to Paris*

MADEMOISELLE MARS

*Her "temperamental upsets" continually disturbed Dumas*

individual in a shiny coat and still more shiny trousers. The young man stared at him and gasped. Auguste Lafarge! But where were the box coat with the thirty-six bands, the boots *à la hussarde* and that gargantuan watch chain that had rattled so musically? Auguste had fallen upon evil times. The cynical bitterness of the literary failure filled his soul and Alexandre sat and listened to malicious attacks on Talma, on Jouy, on Théaulon, on all the successful figures of the day. Over a small brandy Lafarge waxed more and more scornful and bitter. It is the way with some men who fall from fortune's favor. They cannot forgive those who dine better than they do. Alexandre was being shown another side to literary life in the capital, but as yet he could not comprehend it. Jealousies, meannesses, the machinations of cliques, the intrigues of small minds against greater, these things were mysteries to him. Adolphe rescued him and bore him away to the Théâtre-Français.

When Alexandre saw Talma appear upon the stage, clad in the robes of Sylla, a cry of amazement burst from him. This was not the short man who had been washing his chest that morning, but the noblest Roman of them all. He was the Napoleon of the stage. This mime with his lightning glance, his calm and marblelike countenance, his magnificent simplicity, his heartbreaking melancholy, was not even of the same world as that pathetic sallow Cudot who had played Hamlet in Soissons. Dumas was stunned, dazzled, fascinated. When Adolphe suggested that they go to Talma's dressing room after the fall of the curtain the young man accepted with alacrity. They passed through the murky back corridors of the Théâtre-Français and pushed their way into the crowded dressing room. Talma, still in his white robes, was removing the crown from his head. About him clustered a group of the playwrights of the day: Casimir Delavigne, who had just put the finishing touches to *L'École des vieillards,* Lucien Arnault, whose *Régulus* had made a fair sensation, Soumet, whose *Saül* had been one of the great successes of the Théâtre-Français, Népomucène Lemercier, that paralyzed brute of uneven talents that rose to *Agamemnon* and dipped to *Cahin-Caha,* Delrieu, who had been at work on his *Artaxerce* since 1809, Viennet, whose tragedies were better on paper than on the stage, and M. de Jouy, the hero of the hour, the author of *Sylla.* The amazed young man from Villers-

Cotterets stopped short just within the door. He listened to the names Adolphe pronounced and he trembled. He blushed vividly whenever one of these men, who seemed like Titans to him, turned an inquiring glance in his direction.

Presently Talma turned and observed the two young men hovering in the doorway. He beckoned and Alexandre took two steps toward him. They conversed.

"Well, *Monsieur le Poète,*" Talma said, "you are satisfied?"

The group of playwrights stared at the country boy in the absurdly long coat. Alexandre stammered:

"More than that . . . monsieur . . . I am wonderstruck. . . ."

"You must see me again. You must ask for more seats."

Alexandre shook his head. He explained that he was returning home on the morrow.

"That is a pity," said Talma. "You might have seen me as Régulus."

He smiled at Lucien Arnault.

"Impossible," replied the young man, "I must return to the provinces."

At that moment he would have enjoyed seeing the provinces in their last conflagration.

"What do you do in the . . . provinces?"

The young man hung his head. He stuttered:

"A lawyer's clerk. . . ."

"Come, come," said Talma briskly. "You must not despair because of that. Corneille was clerk to a procurator!" He turned to the group of playwrights. "Gentlemen," he announced with a gesture, "allow me to introduce a future Corneille." The playwrights smiled. Talma was superb when he was teasing young men. Alexandre blushed to his eyes. He held out his arm and said:

"Lay your hand on my forehead, Monsieur; it will bring me luck."

The quizzical smile died from Talma's face as he placed a white hand on Alexandre's forehead. The actor assumed the place of the man. He declaimed:

"There—so be it. Alexandre Dumas, I baptize thee poet in the name of Shakespeare, Corneille, and of Schiller. . . . Return to the provinces, return to your office; if you really have a vocation, the angel of poetry will know where to find you wherever you are and

will carry you off by the hair of your head like the prophet Habakkuk and will take you where Fate determines."

A soft murmur of laughter rose from the assembled playwrights as Alexandre walked blindly from the dressing room. Following Adolphe, he proceeded down the narrow twisting staircase, through the black corridor, along the *galerie* de Nemours, and so out on the Place du Palais Royal. The dark bulk of the offices of Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans loomed against the deep blue of the midnight sky. A few belated pedestrians clattered over the cobbles, and a ragged boy bearing a torch hurried toward the rue de Richelieu. Adolphe bade farewell to Alexandre. "There," he said, "you know your way—the rue Croix-des-Petits Champs, the rue Coquillière, the rue des Vieux-Augustins. Good-night." He disappeared in the darkness on his way to the rue Pigale. Alexandre did not know his way. Therefore, fearful stories of ferocious footpads flooding his mind, he hastily climbed into the first cab that came along and ordered the *cocher* to drive to the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins. That individual stared through his whiskers at him, lashed at his bony horse, and twenty seconds later drew up before the little hotel. A crestfallen young man emerged, paid the exorbitant amount of fifty sous for a ride as brief as a wink of the eye, and climbed to his room. Paillet, who had been to the opera, was seated before the bed regarding a few francs with a woeful eye. They possessed a dozen francs between them. It was agreed to start for Crespy at seven o'clock in the morning. The sun was shining when the two young men departed from the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins. The next day they reached Crespy. M. Lefèvre had returned before them. That evening after dinner he drew Alexandre aside and explained that a machine may work properly only when all its wheels are going. Dumas took the hint, resigned from his clerkship, accepted M. Lefèvre as a friend, and announced that his future was in Paris.

One morning Madame Dumas came into her son's small bed chamber with her eyes full of tears. She sat down beside him, and putting her arms about the tall youth who was sitting up in bed in some perplexity, said: "I have just sold everything to pay off our debts." These debts, which had mounted from month to month and from year to year, swallowed up the thirty roods of land left by General

Dumas, the house that M. Harlay had at last left, and the few valuable objects which had decorated the humble dwelling in the rue de Lormet. All that was left were a portfolio of drawings by Giambattista Piranesi, a trunk crammed with letters and documents, and two hundred and fifty-three francs in cash. Alexandre had been out of employment for nearly four months. He was over twenty now and he realized how disgraceful this was. It was time for him to become a man.

He kissed his mother and said: "Give me the fifty-three francs. I will go to Paris with them, and, I promise you, I will come back with good news."

The vista of Paris had never been absent from his mind since he had made the momentous trip with Paillet. It had hung on the horizon, a luminous and magical city, a land of promise where true desert was meted its rich reward, a sort of Bagdad where surprising jewels lay concealed in the mud of the narrow streets. Adolphe was there. He was slaving away at plays although he had had nothing produced as yet. Still he had reached the stage where he could procure readings before theater directors. Talma was there and Talma had baptized him a poet. All the playwrights in the world were there. The ruins of the Empire were there. The Empire! With this thought in his mind Alexandre hurried to the trunk of documents left by his father, and, drawing old yellowed letters and army orders from their envelopes, pored over them. There was aid here, unmistakable aid. Here was a letter from the Duc de Bellune, thanking General Dumas for help in conciliating Napoleon. The Duc de Bellune was Minister for War now under Louis XVIII. Here was a letter from General Sébastiani and here was another from Maréchal Jourdan. Here was a note from Kellermann and another from Bernadotte. Bernadotte was King of Sweden. There was no doubt in Alexandre's mind that these men would leap at the opportunity to help the son of General Dumas. All he need do would be to present these letters recalling old days on the battlefields of Italy, of the Alps, and of Egypt, and these men, now high in power and mighty in influence, would immediately bestir themselves. That much was settled, then. All that remained was to raise enough money to carry him to Paris and provide for him while these maréchaux and ducs and generals were placing him. Alex-

andre did not know what he wanted to do. He did not care. Whatever he did, a position in the Department of War, perhaps, would be simply a stepping-stone to that time when his plays—for he meant to write many of them—would be produced at the Théâtre-Français and at the Odéon. He selected a group of letters and put them away in his wallet.

Madame Dumas, reconciling herself to the departure of her son, gave him the fifty-three francs. Things could not be worse than they were and any straw in the wind was something to grasp at. As she weighed out small papers of tobacco in her humble *bureau de tabac* she restrained the tears and resolutely ignored the remarks about her son, remarks freely vouchsafed by the bustling gossips of the town. They told her the boy was a good-for-nothing, that at twenty years of age he could do nothing but shoot a gun and trap birds, that he had deliberately tricked himself out of a good position with M. Lefèvre, that his head was turned at the silly sights of Paris, that his ambition to write was a ridiculous presumption in an uneducated country boy. Did he think he was another Demoustier? The gossips laughed shrilly and went on their way bobbing their heads. Widow Dumas's son had a mighty tall feather in his ragged cap. He wanted to write tragedies, did he? It would be better for him if he settled down to raising cabbages. It was the Bonapartist blood, no doubt. All of that tribe was like the Corsican who thought he was an Emperor. They had ideas above their station.

Alexandre proceeded with his preparations. He sold the portfolio of Piranesi drawings for fifty francs. So much more was added to the small hoard he was putting away in the worn wallet with the yellowed letters. He went about bidding farewell to his friends, and most of them laughed in his face. One stroke of unexpected luck befell him. Alexandre was an excellent billiard player, another sign of a misspent life according to the gossips. So was Cartier. Playing one evening for small glasses of absinthe, Alexandre, who drank nothing at all, won no less than six hundred glasses. Poor old Cartier was *distrait*. How could a youth who did not drink make away with six hundred glasses of the most burning liquor in France? Alexandre solved this problem by converting his winnings into sous, eighteen hundred of them, and then, to the agreement and relief of Cartier

who ran the posting station, changed this amount into places on the diligence to Paris. Thus he had his passage free, both going to and coming from Paris.

The day was now drawing near when he was to make his departure and test the fickleness of fortune. He continued to go about bidding farewell to his old friends. He went to the good Abbé Grégoire and instead of being lectured on religious precepts, lectured himself. He went to Maître Mennesson who offered him M. Laffitte, the Parisian banker, as an example. Alexandre did not think so much of M. Laffitte in spite of all his stocks and bars of bullion, but he said nothing. Maître Mennesson was more of a misanthrope than ever. He had been married recently. Then Alexandre went to M. Danré at Vouty. M. Danré had been an old friend and hunting companion of General Dumas. He had dabbled in local politics, and when General Foy's name had been put forward on the lists for election, M. Danré had supported him and through his influence had seen him elected. M. Danré's encouragement was all that the disconsolate young man needed. The barbs of his younger friends and the ominous prophecies of the gossips had somewhat discomposed Alexandre. M. Danré, with the gusto of an old man who loves to see youth stepping forth into adventure, went to Madame Dumas and reassured her about her son. Adopting the flowery eloquence of an ancient French gentleman he informed her that Alexandre would take his place in that class of men who were styled rulers. Madame Dumas wanted to laugh and then she decided to cry. M. Danré went even further. He gave Alexandre a letter of introduction to General Foy and the young man carefully placed it in his wallet. He doubted that he should ever have to use it but it might be just as well to keep it.

The day of departure came. Alexandre's few garments were placed in his cheap portmanteau. He shook hands again with his neighbors. A last visit was paid to the cemetery where the body of General Dumas lay crumbling in the earth. Madame Darcourt, gazing from her window, saw the tall form of the young man in his ill-fitting long coat. His hair needed a barber's attention. Beside him was the short woman in black to whom fortune had been so malign. Mother and son, walking slowly, loitering, gazing sadly about them, made their way to the Hôtel de la Boule d'Or where the diligence was to pick

up Alexandre. At half past nine they heard the sound of wheels and knew that they had but half an hour longer. They retired to a small room in the hotel and simultaneously burst into tears. There had been no parting like this for Madame Dumas since the body of the General had been borne down the steps of the Hôtel de l'Épée and carried away to the still hillside. She wept for misery and doubt. Her son wept for hope. He had the world before him; he was sanguine; he was filled with the dreams of youth. Madame Dumas's world was behind her, and as she now lived in her son, her life was being taken from her. The house in the rue de Lormet would be very empty. The horn sounded from the diligence, and Alexandre, followed more slowly by his mother, hurried down to the heavy vehicle. He turned and kissed his mother, and she clung to him for a moment. Then he mounted and stowed away his portmanteau. There was the heavy crack of a whip like a pistol shot, the clatter of hoofs, and the diligence rumbled off into the darkness. Alexandre gazed back as long as he could at the solitary person who was waving farewell to him.

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE ASSAULT ON PARIS

### I

It was five o'clock in the morning when Dumas descended from the *Messageries de l'Éclair* diligence before number nine, rue de Bouloy, Paris. Although the day was clear it was a typical Bourbon Sunday, with all the shops fast-shuttered and the narrow streets deserted. The peculiar smugness of the eighteenth Louis permeated the capital. Dumas inquired his way and trudged the short distance to the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins, that small hostelry where with Paillet he had put up for a day four months before, and paid for his keep with hares and partridges. The proprietor was still abed but an early-rising waiter recognized Dumas and conducted him to the same room he had occupied on his previous visit. It would have been difficult not to remember the young man, for he was a quaint enough figure. There had been no revolution of fashion in Villers-Cotterets, but there most assuredly had been one in the Paris of 1823. Therefore the spectacle of a gaping young man with long, frizzy hair and an outmoded coat that reached to his skinny ankles must have titillated the few Parisians who ventured abroad on this quiet Sunday morning. Dumas was the country bumpkin to perfection, enthusiastic but unbelievably naïve. On this first day he was the prototype of that Ange Pitou whom he was to create years later. There was no Bastille for him to destroy, but there was a city to conquer. He did not carry a pike. In place of this he possessed a handful of letters to the ancient military friends of his dead father and a bubbling optimism that betrayed his ignorance of the difficulty of careers.

No sooner had Dumas installed himself in his little room than drowsiness overtook him, and warning the boy to arouse him at nine

o'clock he tried to compose himself for sleep. But just as excitement had kept him awake in the smelly interior of the diligence, so now did it stimulate him to wide-eyed dreams of the future. How could he sleep with his promised land of Paris all about him? Though the streets were quiet and the yellow and brown fronts of the houses stolid with their closed shutters he could nevertheless experience that august agitation which is always the atmosphere of Paris. The Seine flowed silently enough; the Tuileries dozed in the early sun and a stout king snored within; the Institute caught the morning light; Henri Quatre dreamt on his motionless horse; the bridges arched like frozen visions over the ocher river; Notre Dame de Paris sat like the mother of Time on her island and waited. But threading the air was the restlessness that is always in the heart of Paris, that restlessness which is like a million hands grasping for flags, for drums, for pikes, for the square cobble-stones of demolished barricades, above all for the laurel and the immortelle. So when the landlord of the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins poked his head inside Dumas's door he found the young man striding up and down, eager to set forth and find Adolphe de Leuven and announce to him that at last he had come to Paris to stay.

The sportsman's instinct was strong in Dumas—had he not hunted through the trackless woods about Villers-Cotterets?—so it was a fairly easy matter to wind his way across the river, through the rue du Mont-Blanc, and finally to fourteen, rue Pigale, where the de Leuvens lived. The old nobleman was walking in his garden, capriciously feeding sugar to his roses. He welcomed Dumas with his usual serenity, learned that the young man had come to conquer Paris, smiled inwardly, and then graciously offered a garret in the top of his house as a brooding place for the Muse. "Go and arrange it with Adolphe," he said, and turned back to his roses. He had seen too much of life to be surprised at anything. Adolphe was still in bed but the impetuous Dumas awoke him and forgave him his sluggishness when the young Parisian explained that he had been working late the night before on a little drama called *Pauvre Fille*. The two friends had much to say to one another. Dumas described the letters of introduction he carried, particularly one to the Duc de Bellune who was Minister of War. He even called for pen and ink and dashed off an

epistle requesting an interview with the duc. Then, having settled his future to his own satisfaction, he turned to eager converse on literature. Who was the playwright of the day? What poetry was being produced? What . . . But Adolphe was dubious. He pointed out that it might be as well to have other strings to one's bow than the problematical favor of the Duc de Bellune who, after all . . . "Ah!" exclaimed Dumas, "if he fails me I still have Maréchal Jourdan and General Sébastiani." Adolphe shook his head but said nothing more. As for Dumas, his sanguinity was but slightly troubled. Had not these men fought side by side with his father in the campaigns of the First Republic? Would they slight the son of the Horatius Cocles of the Tyrol? There could be no doubt about it. Still . . . It would be as well, perhaps, to call on the other maréchaux while awaiting an answer from the Duc de Bellune. So the next morning Dumas, frizzy hair straggling under his hat and long coat impeding his stride, announced himself at the door of Maréchal Jourdan.

The name Alexandre Dumas proved to be an Open Sesame. But when the grizzled Maréchal strode into the room and saw the country youth before him his face changed abruptly. He looked bewildered, then amazed, then slightly irritated. He was a busy man and . . . Undoubtedly he had expected to see that dark giant who had been dubbed *"Monsieur de l'Humanité"* by an enraged revolutionary mob. He had forgotten that General Dumas had died in poverty years before. He had never heard that General Dumas had a son. In fact, he doubted it. He . . . Dumas attempted to establish his identity in vain. The Maréchal urged him toward the door. It might be so, but . . . Ten minutes after he had entered like a young lion Alexandre found himself in the street, a pained and bewildered lamb.

It was a sad experience for Dumas. As he walked from the Faubourg St. Germain, where Maréchal Jourdan lived, to the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, where General Sébastiani lived, depressing thoughts crept into his mind. No wonder Adolphe had shaken his head skeptically. Well, he would see. There was nothing to do but go doggedly through his list of introductions. At General Sébastiani's house the name Alexandre Dumas again proved to be a magic key. At least *that* had not been forgotten. Sébastiani was in his study dictating to four secretaries. They sat in the four corners of the room and as the

General passed each one of them in turn the secretary would offer a gold snuffbox from which Sébastiani would extract a voluptuous sniff of the Spanish powder. Four secretaries, four snuffboxes, and one General. It was an excellent arrangement. Dumas stood in the doorway and smiled expectantly. A few moments later he was once more in the street. He was on his way back to his rabbit-hole in the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins with absolutely nothing accomplished except the eradication of two names from his list of potential patrons. Truly, Adolphe . . . At the hotel there was no message from the Duc de Bellune. Truly, truly, Adolphe . . . Dumas sat before the *Almanach des 25,000 adresses* and idly thumbed it. Twenty-five thousand addresses and no place to go. Twenty-five . . . But, wait! Under his finger he saw a name that stirred memories. What . . . Verdier . . . ah! That general who had served in Egypt under his father. A close comrade! An old brother-in-arms! Ten minutes later Dumas was standing before number six, Faubourg Montmartre.

The sullen concierge had said, "Fourth floor, small door to the left." That was a peculiar habitation for a Republican General. Maréchal Jourdan and General Sébastiani had great houses. General Sébastiani had four secretaries and four gold snuffboxes. But neither one of them had any memory at all. Dumas climbed the four flights, not falling over his long coat more than three times on the way. There was a modest green string before the small door to the left and he pulled it. A moment later the door swung open and a man of about sixty wearing a cap edged with astrakhan, a green-braided jacket and trousers of white calfskin, stood framed in the doorway. In his hand was a palette of paints and a brush. This man appeared to be an artist and yet the faint aura of long vanished gunpowder hung about him. Dumas was dubious.

"Have I made some mistake?" he asked, "I . . ."

"What do you desire, Monsieur?" countered the man in the astrakhan cap.

"To pay my respects to General Verdier."

Dumas was ushered through a small hall into a study. There he asked if he might see the general. The man in the astrakhan cap turned around in surprise.

"What general?"

"General Verdier."

"I am he."

Dumas stared in amazement and Verdier began to laugh. How many gold snuffboxes was it Sébastiani had? Or were they gold secretaries? Dumas was becoming mixed in his mind. Truly, this Paris was full of unaccountable things. He announced himself to General Verdier as "the son of your old comrade-in-arms in Egypt, General Dumas." Verdier looked at him closely and then tears welled into his eyes. He held out his hand and said, "By the powers, so you are!" Ah, this was different. Dumas wanted to kiss the first kindly hand that had been stretched out to him.

But the remainder of the interview was sad enough. Verdier had been pensioned off for some imaginary conspiracy and he was absolutely without power in any place. He passed his days painting in his little studio and waiting for the end of time. This man had commanded regiments under the Egyptian suns. He had been one of those upon whom forty centuries had gazed down. He had, without knowing it, solved the riddle of the Sphinx.

"I can give you lessons in painting," he said. Dumas did not desire to be an artist. Verdier questioned the youth about his prospects and Dumas told him about his visits to Maréchal Jourdan and General Sébastiani. Then there was the as yet unanswered letter to the Duc de Bellune. But one hope remained. Dumas had a letter to General Foy. Perhaps that . . . Hope dies hard in a young man. Verdier shrugged his shoulders. He advised the youth to present himself early on the morrow morning at General Foy's house. The General, he was sure, would receive him kindly. If not for his own sake at least for the sake of his father. Not all of those veterans who had made possible the victories of General Bonaparte had forgotten the name of Dumas. "And," added Verdier, "will you dine with me? We will talk about Egypt. It was hot there." Dumas promised to return at six, and he leaped down the four flights of stairs with a lighter heart than he had ascended. As for Verdier he returned to the head of a Cossack he was painting.

Well, this was different. If it did not remove obstacles at least it showed that men varied. Dumas began to see that the world was a multifarious place, that memories were both short and long, that grati-

tudes and obligations were at best empty words and that the kindly world of boyish illusions wherein he had lived at Villers-Cotterets was not at all the same world that dominated the Paris of His Majesty King Louis XVIII. The unknown youth may knock at the thresholds of great doors behind which there is plenty, but he is more apt to be given a crust when he knocks at the threshold of a garret. Adolphe, when he heard of the day's adventures, shook his head. "If your story finishes as it has begun," he said, "you will do more than write a comic opera. You will write a comedy." He then gave the young man two seats for that evening's performance of *Régulus* at the Théâtre-Français and went his own way to work on his never-to-be-produced *Pauvre Fille*. Poor de Leuven. He who had started so much better equipped than Dumas was to end so far below him, never hitting the universal appeal which was to be a part of the titanic strength of the author of *Monte Cristo* and *Les Trois Mousquetaires*. De Leuven's apex was to be *Le Postillon de Longjumeau* and *Vert-Vert,* and who is there who remembers those gentle comedies? Only the pertinacious historians of the French stage.

Dumas dined with Verdier (it was a dinner with extras at the Palais-Royal and it cost six francs) and then they repaired to the Théâtre-Français to see Talma in *Régulus*. The mind of the young man naturally turned back to that performance of *Sylla* and the blessing he had received in Talma's dressing room. Talma was superb in certain scenes of this rather dull play by Lucien Arnault, and Dumas, not too much the critic, was properly thrilled. When he parted company with General Verdier at the corner of the rue Coquillière he was filled again with projects for his own future. Verdier watching the long frizzy hair and absurd coat disappearing around the corner must have smiled. Youth is an excellent anesthetic for disappointments, but when one has been baked under Egyptian suns and frozen in the passes of the Alps there is no youth left. There is nothing to do then but to pass the time by painting pictures of Cossacks in fourth-floor garrets.

At ten o'clock in the morning Dumas presented himself at the door of General Foy's house in the rue du Mont-Blanc. Foy was discovered amidst a clutter of maps, speeches, proofs, documents and open books.

He was at work on his *Histoire de la Péninsule*. When Dumas entered he was writing at a table that could be lifted or lowered as the General required. He was a short, thin man of fifty, with scanty grey hair, a projecting forehead, a straight nose, and a decidedly bilious complexion.

"Are you the son of that General Dumas who commanded the Army of the Alps?" he inquired.

Dumas admitted it. He then presented his letter of introduction from Monsieur Danré. Foy read it and announced that the worthy Danré had recommended the youth strongly. Dumas, trembling with uncertainty, answered the abrupt questions of the General as concisely as he could. This was his last hope, and if it failed it meant that he must creep back to Villers-Cotterets where his poverty-stricken mother waited eagerly for news of a future which might, perhaps, be a little brighter than the past years. He could not go back. He could not go back. That was all there was to it. The General asked him if he knew mathematics.

"No, General."

Algebra? Geometry? Physics?

Perspiration ran down Dumas's face. It was "No, General," to each query. He had not realized what an ignorant fellow he was.

The General frowned.

Law? Latin? Bookkeeping?

Dumas was in agony, the agony of his own ignorance, as he shook his head at the mention of each subject. General Foy was visibly sorry for him. This bedraggled looking boy who did not even know enough to cut his hair or get a coat that fitted possessed nothing but his ambition and a wildly reiterated declaration that he would speedily learn all of those things of which he was not so ignorant. General Foy shook his head. "I do not want to abandon you . . ." he murmured. Dumas was tearful in his plea not to be abandoned. "Well," said the General in a dubious voice, "write your name and address and I will inquire . . . I will see . . ." Dumas, with that touch of the sentimental-dramatic that was to be a part of his ardent nature all his life, refused the General's own pen as a profanation and took another. He inscribed his name on a sheet of paper with failing spirits. This meant nothing. This was merely a polite way of getting rid of him.

He would not hear from General Foy again. The deep voice of the General broke in on his despair. He said:

"We are saved!"

Dumas lifted a bewildered face.

"Your handwriting!" exclaimed General Foy. "You write a beautiful hand."

An insupportable shame swept over Dumas. He who desired to conquer Paris possessed only a good handwriting. He could aspire, perhaps, to the future of a copying clerk. This was too much. But the General went on, relief in his voice. He was dining that day at the Palais-Royal. He would speak to the Duc d'Orléans. He would tell him that he ought to take the son of a Republican General into his offices. It would be a good gesture. He bade Dumas sit down and draw up a petition to the duc. Then he dismissed him, inviting him to lunch the next day that he might inform him what had transpired at the Duc d'Orléans' dinner. Dumas returned disconsolately to the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins. A copying clerk! It was ridiculous. But, then . . . Mathematics. Algebra. Geometry. Physics. Law. Latin. Bookkeeping. *Peste!* Arriving at the hotel Dumas found his long awaited letter from the Duc de Bellune. The young man hesitated before breaking the seal. On either side of him stood good and evil fortune. Which would it be this time? The Duc de Bellune informed M. Dumas that he had no time for personal interviews and begged the gentleman to lay before him in writing anything he had to say. Dumas wrote back that he had desired only to lay before the duc a letter of thanks which he, the duc, had once written his general-in-chief, Dumas, but inasmuch as he could not have the honor of seeing the duc personally he would send a copy of the letter. The young man passed the rest of the day brooding about the morrow.

General Foy, surrounded by the débris of his historical undertaking, was at work as he had been on the previous day. He received Dumas with a smile.

"It is all settled," he said.

Dumas turned an astonished face toward him. "How? . . . What? . . ."

"Yes, you are to become a supernumerary on the secretarial staff of the Duc d'Orléans. The salary will be twelve hundred francs a year. It is not much but it is your opportunity."

Dumas seemed to spin in flashes of light.

"It is a fortune!" he cried. "And I begin?"

"Next Monday."

"Next Monday?"

"Yes. The chief clerk in the office has already been notified."

"What is his name?"

"M. Oudard. Use my name when you introduce yourself."

Dumas was nearly speechless with joy.

"Oh, General . . . I . . ."

He flung his arms about General Foy's neck and kissed him. The General released himself, laughing.

"There is true metal in you," he said. "But do not forget to study."

"I will live by my handwriting now," declared the young man, "but I promise you that there will come a time when I will live by my pen." Dumas gabbled on excitedly. He would hurry home to tell his mother the news and return to Paris by Sunday night. He would labor indefatigably. A luncheon table was spread and he lunched tête-à-tête with the General. The food and wine warmed him and he began to discuss his literary ambitions, describing the plays he intended to write, the poems, the romances. Foy listened tolerantly, smiling a little at this enthusiasm that was to do so much on twelve hundred francs a year. If he was a trifle dubious he made no sign. After all . . . Dreams . . . foolish hopes . . . fugitive clouds of illusion.

Dumas dashed from the rue du Mont-Blanc to the rue Pigale. Adolphe rejoiced with his friend. The old de Leuven continued to tend his roses, a smile of quiet ridicule on his worldly-wise face. Madame de Leuven thought of the joy that Madame Dumas would experience on the morrow and tears came into her eyes. As for Dumas, he was in the seventh heaven. Napoleon had been no happier when, after the espousal of Marie-Louise, he had repeated three times, "My poor uncle Louis XVI!"

By four-thirty Dumas was in the diligence and the heavy wheels were rumbling along the road to Villers-Cotterets.

## II

The Paris of 1823 was a far different city from the glittering metropolis of vast boulevards which stretches along the Seine today. It was ruled by a sick gourmet, Louis XVIII, that Bourbon who had been Louis-Stanislas-Xavier, Comte de Provence, and who had been raised to the throne in 1814 as the least of several evils. Who placed him on the throne? Nobody knew. It had been circumstance. The Allied Powers had not wanted him, not even Alexander of Russia. The French populace had not cried wildly for him. Perhaps circumstance was another name for Talleyrand. France was tired. It was weary of long campaigns and the constant raising of regiments. It was exhausted with Pyrrhic victories. It was tired of a ruler who represented in himself action. Louis XVIII did not represent action. His fine head and intelligent eyes crowned an absurdly corpulent body which suggested the reverse of action. This impotent and lethargic frame brought to mind no prancing white horse that lifted its pink nose and sniffed the battle from afar. It suggested peace, a time of quiet breathing after fifteen years of ceaseless and gigantic effort. And so there was peace in France. There was peace in Paris also. Louis XVIII ruled. His Ministry consisted of Comte de Peyronnet, Keeper of Seals; Vicomte de Montmorency, Foreign Minister; Comte de Cubières, Minister for the Interior; le Maréchal Duc de Bellune, Minister for War; Marquis de Clermont-Tonnerre, Minister for the Navy; Comte de Villèle, Minister for Finance; and Monsieur de Lauriston, King's Chamberlain. It was not a brilliant cabinet. France was as tired of brilliance as she was of war.

To understand this Paris through whose arteries Alexandre Dumas walked, one must, first of all, comprehend the fact that Baron Haussmann was yet to exist. It was a Paris of narrow cobbled streets and dirty-yellow buildings, "a city full of shadows cast by occasional oil lamps, hanging on strings, or by torches carried by fearful pedestrians." It had its open expanses, its Champs Élysées, its Champs-de-Mars, its Luxembourg Gardens, but an almost impenetrable darkness concealed these breathing spaces at night. It was not until 1829 that the first gas light was solemnly ignited in the rue de la Paix. The only mode of conveyance was by omnibus and private carriage (by

1836 there were three hundred and seventy-eight buses rumbling through the streets) for the *chemin de fer* was not introduced until 1837. It was difficult to move about, then, and while it was safe enough in the central districts that were more or less lighted by the shop windows and oil-lamps it was a ticklish matter to strike off into the byways, the tortuous side-alleys where footpads and drunken assassins lurked.

During the day a bustling activity animated the thoroughfares. Itinerant merchants, dirty and unshaven, swarmed along the cobbles shouting and singing their wares. German tinder. Lumettes. Ink. Toothpicks. Perfumes of the seraglio. Cocoa. Liquorice water. Theatre checks. Cakes of Nanterre, sold by red-armed and bold-eyed girls. In the rue du Havre sat one of the characters of the city, the bedraggled merchant of *tripes à la mode de Caen.* About the Pont Neuf, on it, and along the Quai des Augustins (and these were probably the first glimpses of Paris that Dumas saw) was a motley horde of tradesmen pushing hither and thither and vociferating their goods, pictures by bad artists, second-hand bargains, fritters, fried potatoes, and dogs. The *décrotteurs* (shoe-blacks) wandered through the mob in search of young bucks (ambitious Rastignacs) who desired to have their boots polished before they fared toward the Faubourg St. Germain. In all the carrefours were the colored booths of the *saltimbanques* (mountebanks and clowns), before the larger of which hung gaudily painted advertisements of such wonders to be seen within as skeletons of Chinese mandarins, the sword with which Fernando Cortez conquered Mexico, the glass through which Columbus discovered America, a button from the breeches of King Dagobert, the cane of M. Voltaire, colossal women and white negroes. The shrill whine of music came from these booths and mingled with the strident yells of the barkers. Then there were the *chanteurs* (singers of topical songs) who stood on the corners or before the open fronts of the cafés and bellowed doggerel full of concealed political allusions, much to the joy of the shifting mob. In odd corners were raised the tables of the *arracheurs de dents malades ou saines* who pulled teeth with rusty forceps to the loud roars of their swollen-jawed victims. Threading their way through the crowd were distributors of marvellous powders warranted to cure any ailment at all in woman, man or

beast and also to act as love-philtres and aphrodisiacs, as the case might warrant. The crowd itself was a kaleidoscopic study of ex-officers of the Imperial Army, young bucks ogling giggling wenches, solemn burghers in long coats, noisy students, clerks, pickpockets, and ladies of the town. It was a vivid medley of shouting, jostling, laughter, singing and fighting.

The Palais-Royal remained as it had been under the Empire, the center of pleasure and business. Shops lined the arcades and third-class tailors did a thriving business in redingotes, habits and gilets. Young clerks gaped at wasp-waisted blue coats ornamented with gold buttons and the old beaux forced their fat paunches into white gilets embroidered with green flowers. Restaurants abounded and the hungry pedestrian might dine for two francs at Chez Urbain or Chez Richard; if he were a gourmet and desired to plunge he might go to the more expensive places, such as Véry, Véfour, or Les Frères Provençeaux. The smoking dishes were hurried to the stained tables and the tall bottles of wine were emptied again and again. Limonadiers refreshed the thirsty with sorbets or agreeable liqueurs. At the two extremities of the Palais-Royal were the merchants of provisions who sold everything from enormous turbots to the smallest larks. Charlatans, pedicures, dentists, curers of headaches, were scattered along the wooden galleries, and between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, painted beauties strolled through the throng seeking for trade. Around the corner was the Comédie-Française where for a few francs, the dramatically minded might see Talma or Mademoiselle Mars in one of the solemn turgid dramas left over from the Empire.

This, then, was a Paris of movement and life, held in check only by the colorless qualities of the Bourbon government. It was a place where young men, especially those young men born under the suns of Austerlitz and sensing the romantic spirit already in the air, might push themselves forward, winning by their sheer effrontery what their fathers had won by the sword. Art had languished under Napoleon. He could create a brigade but he could not create a poet. He could proscribe Chateaubriand, Madame de Staël and Lemercier, and he could present valuable posts to Lebrun, to Luce de Lancival, to Baour-Lormian. Louis XVIII was no better, for the Royalist reaction struck out fiercely at literary men. But literature succeeds in spite of dynas-

ties, and in 1823 Paris was full of writers. The more illustrious of them, those who had achieved a certain position, included Chateaubriand, Jouy, Lemercier, Arnault, Étienne, de Béranger, Charles Nodier, Viennet, Scribe, Théaulon, Soumet, Casimir Delavigne, Lucien Arnault, Ancelot, Lamartine, Désaugiers. These men differed in quality; some were to remain permanent fixtures in the hierarchy of French letters; others were to be outmoded and forgotten completely. But for the time all of them held the cultured ear. Then there were the writers whose interests were political, Cousin, Salvandy, Villemain, Thiers, Augustin Thierry, Michelet, Mignet, Vitet, Cavé, Mérimée and Guizot. Many of these men wrote for the journals, but they wrote circumspectly, for the sharp eyes of the Bourbon censors were upon them.

The foremost journals of the time left much to be desired. There was the *Journal des Débats,* a government organ reflecting the conciliatory royalism of Louis XVIII and M. de Villèle, a policy of optimism and vacillation. The *Constitutionnel* was liberal but timid and burst out only against the Jesuits. The *Drapeau Blanc* was nondescript. The *Foudre* was the organ of the ultra-Royalists. The *Miroir* was at the opposite pole from the *Foudre;* it was ultra-liberal and always in trouble. Animated by the wit and malice of such minds in opposition to the times as Jouy, Arnault, Jal, Coste, Castel and Moreau, it became the object of a relentless persecution on the part of the government. Suppressed as the *Miroir* it sprang to life again as the *Pandore;* extinguished as the *Pandore* it blossomed as *Opinion;* scotched as *Opinion* it made another desperate resurrection as the *Réunion.* Slaughtered as *Réunion* it remained in its grave to rise no more. There was also the *Courrier français,* a periodical almost republican in a time when the word republic was anathema. It was for this journal that Adolphe de Leuven's father, that old gentleman who fed sugar to roses, wrote his editorials.

When Dumas came to Paris, to this royalist city of dirt and noise and politics and governmental oppression, the shadow of the romantic movement was already distinguishable among the group of untried younger men who were at work. These men had yet to prove themselves; not all of them were romantics; but as a whole they represented

a decided break with the older tradition. Among them were Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, Honoré de Balzac, Frederick Soulié, Alfred de Musset, Sainte-Beuve, Auguste Barbier, Alphonse Karr and Théophile Gautier. George Sand was as yet unknown, the three famous women of the day being Mesdames Desbordes-Valmore, Amable Tastu and Delphine Gay, all poets. To say that Paris was a hive of romantic gestation would not be saying too much. Louis XVIII, thanks to his policy of vacillation, was to die a king and Charles X, thanks to his policy of tyranny, was to live out the last few years of his life in banishment. The romantic movement may be said to have flowered into full life in the revivifying flame of the Revolution of 1830. When Louis-Philippe came to the throne the romantics came into the sunlight. But they had been preparing for some time. Led by Victor Hugo and Alfred de Vigny they presented a formidable front. By 1823 eager young men were scribbling away in their attic rooms, writing dramas that would have horrified Racine and composing poems and prose works that marked a clean break with the outworn formalism of the past. It was a good time, therefore, for the undisciplined and ardent nature of Dumas to feed upon the inspiration of the young men around him. He lacked a background and they created it for him over night.

## III

The time had come to face facts. Dumas desired that his mother sell out everything and come to Paris with him, but Madame Dumas demurred. She might be naïve; nevertheless she possessed common sense and understood far better than her son the value of money. His income was to be twelve hundred francs, and at best he was only a probationer. In three months he might have nothing, not even a desk in the establishment of the Duc d'Orléans. Madame Dumas did not dare to sell out her *bureau de tabac,* remove to Paris, and trust to fortune so utterly. She had probably never intended to do so. Alexandre must have his first wrestle with fortune alone and unhampered. It was therefore decided that he should return to Paris without her and that his bed, bedding, table linen, four chairs, a table, a chest of drawers, and two sets of plate would be forwarded to him. He was

to engage a cheap room, settle down, work hard, and when his position was secure he was to write to his mother. Then she would hesitate no longer; she would sell everything and join him. As a last gesture his mother divided the small remnant of her money with him, kissed him and bade him godspeed.

Sunday evening a mob of townfolk gathered outside M. Cartier's house where the awkward-looking diligence stood, and assisted at the departure of Dumas. He was like one of the navigators of the Middle Ages setting forth to discover new continents. Everybody was there, everybody but Adèle Dalvin. She was not there, nor did Dumas expect her. It is doubtful that he thought of her. His quick mind could forget as easily as it could be hurt. But the gossips were all there, Madame Darcourt, Madame Lafarge, Madame Dupré, Madame Dupuis. Like those knitting women, those ferocious madames of the Terror, who sat before the guillotine and counted the heads of the aristocrats as they dropped like melons into the bloody basket, they were present to hear the farewells between mother and son. There are no meetings and partings, no births and deaths in French towns that are not witnessed by the madames, who are, after all, the tragic Greek chorus of the comedy of life. They are the commentators on existence and their marginal notes are history. They will watch the passing of an Emperor and the departure of a country lad with the same vague consciousness that both are integral portions of the annals of Time.

Madame Dumas, long after her son's diligence had disappeared, stood watching the vacant road with tears in her eyes.

Dumas, arriving before the familiar number nine, rue de Bouloy, Paris, paused no longer at the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins than to fling his bag in a small chamber. He then set forth in search of permanent lodgings. There is no more exciting occupation than this: to be young, to arrive in the great city where one's fortune is to be made, and to run up and down strange flights of stairs seeking for the little corner that will be home. Dumas went up a great many flights of stairs for he soon learned that the higher one mounted the cheaper the rent would be. He finally entered the immense mass of houses called the Italian quarter, and, climbing as usual, discovered a small room on the fourth floor of number one, Place des Italiens. It was small but it

boasted an alcove. It was papered with a jaundiced yellow paper that had cost twelve sous the piece. It opened on the back yard. The concierge announced that it might be had for one hundred and twenty francs a year. Dumas with the gesture of a Monte Cristo, admitted that it suited, that he would move in immediately and that his furniture would arrive on the following day. The concierge hinted that a *denier à Dieu* might not be amiss. Dumas did not know a *denier à Dieu* from the King of Dahomey. He suspected that it might be a commission on letting the room. With a majestic gesture, copied from the unfortunate Lafarge's box-coat era, he thrust his hand in his pocket, drew forth a napoleon and dropped it in the palm of the concierge. As the coin dropped—twenty francs as a *denier à Dieu* on a hundred and twenty franc room—the concierge nearly dropped with it. That individual, blowing through his whiskers like a walrus, told his wife that a prince traveling incognito had taken the little room upstairs. Madame Concierge immediately bustled up the four flights and requested the honor of looking after M. Dumas. M. Dumas agreed with a haughty air; he also agreed to pay her five francs a month for this favor.

Again in the streets Dumas savoured the city with a new air, an air of possession and conquest. These people hurrying by, these bright windows, these shouting hucksters and *saltimbanques,* all this medley of noise and movement and confusion formed the trappings of the stage upon which he, Alexandre Dumas of Villers-Cotterets, was to play an important part. He was to conquer this innumerable-headed monster and tame it. The time would come when he would enter brilliantly-lighted porticoes on the arm of Monsieur de Chateaubriand. He would gaze into the starry eyes of Mademoiselle Mars. It is in this way that youth expatiates upon the future while walking through muddy streets and avoiding lice-ridden peddlers. Dumas turned toward the humble quarters of General Verdier, quarters which, like his own, were four flights up. But General Verdier, taking advantage of a fair Sunday evening, had gone out to stroll along the boulevards. Dumas decided to do the same thing. He stepped along with his head held high. Presently he reached the Café de la Porte-Saint-Honoré and peering inquisitively through the small-paned windows into the crowded and lighted interior he saw someone he knew, the son of

that ancient Hiraux who had striven so hopelessly to make a violinist of him. Young Hiraux welcomed Dumas, explained that he was the proprietor of the Café de la Porte-Saint-Honoré and invited the youth to remain for dinner. Dumas sat down (he had not realized his hunger before) and ate everything that was put before him. It was excellent. Then, expanding under the gentle sensuous magic of smoking viands, he decided to plunge, to go to the Porte-Saint-Martin theater and witness the production of *Le Vampire.*

Reaching the theatre Dumas discovered enormous queues of people enclosed by barriers waiting their turns at the ticket offices. This seemed strange and the young man prowled about helplessly. One of the *habitués* of a queue observing Dumas's confusion called to him. "Hey, you!" Dumas turned with dignity. After all, he was a supernumerary clerk in the Duc d'Orléans' office. "Yes, you with the frizzy locks," continued the uncouth *habitué,* "would you like my place?" Dumas loftily ignored the insult to his hair. "Have you a place?" he inquired. "Can't you see for yourself?" Dumas couldn't see anything at all but a mob of pushing people. Still, perhaps the offensive stranger had taken a place in advance. With alacrity he paid the franc demanded by the *habitué* and leaping over the barrier took his position in the queue. He fondly imagined that this franc would carry him into the theater. When he reached the ticket office he discovered his mistake and reluctantly disgorged six francs from his pocket while the queue whistled and roared at him to hasten. A dull flush mantled his face and he was debating whether he should challenge the stout shoving gentleman behind him to a duel when he was forced through the doors. The pit was full and Dumas found himself in the midst of the noisy *claque,* which at that time ruled the theaters. When he removed his hat a murmur of laughter went up from the *claque.* Dumas glared about him. He was as sensitive about his hair as d'Artagnan was about his buttercup-yellow pony. "Pardon me, gentlemen," he said, "but I should like to know the cause of your laughter, so that I may be able to laugh with you." There was a dead silence and then from the depths of this silence a solemn voice exclaimed, "Oh! that head of his!" Dumas immediately turned and slapped the wag's face and challenged him to a duel. Three minutes later he found himself in the street.

He began to reflect that hastiness was not always a desirable quality. It was well enough to be punctilious about one's honor but if one had come to witness a performance of *Le Vampire* one might as well exercise a bit of discretion. He had already spent more money than he should but the play lured him. Carefully avoiding the entrance through which he had been unceremoniously hustled into the street he entered the theater again, buying another ticket, this time for the orchestra. His reception was courteous enough. The orchestra contained a different stamp of people from the rowdies of the pit and Dumas sank with a sigh of relief into a seat beside a gentleman wearing grey trousers, a buff waistcoat and a black tie. He was reading a small tome entitled *Le Pastissier François,* printed by Louis and Daniel Elzevir at Amsterdam in 1655.

Dumas with the ingenuousness of the country boy entered into conversation with the gentleman by inquiring if he were extremely fond of eggs. The gentleman raised his eyes and observed the frizzy-haired lank boy in the long coat. There was something about the frank blue eyes turned upon him that he liked. They talked. The strange gentleman explained the rarity of Elzevirs, the means by which they might be identified, the various title pages, and a dozen and one bibliographical items which were so much Greek to Dumas. He had never been aware of the rarity of books. The rise of the curtain put a stop to this flow of information.

*Le Vampire* was an old fashioned shocker, a weird sensational drama with supernatural beings flitting about the stage and all the impossible hocus-pocus of the vampire legend of Lord Ruthven. Dumas was enthralled with it. He thought Philippe as Lord Ruthven marvelous and Madame Dorval wonderful as Malvina. The strange gentleman beside him did not take so agreeably to the play. He groaned, made audible remarks of the most caustic nature, was angrily hissed by his neighbors, and at length relapsed into *Le Pastissier François.* After the first and second acts he conversed engagingly with Dumas about all sorts of things, vampire legends, rotifers, Nero, and *claques.* The young man listened to this easy flow of knowledge and language with the most pleased attention. It is doubtful that he enjoyed the play more than the intervals, and his disappointment was obvious when after the second act the strange gentleman rose, ex-

plained that he could stand the horrible play no longer and departed hugging his Elzevir to his buff waistcoat. Dumas settled down to the third act. At one of the climaxes a loud mocking whistle shrilled from one of the boxes and shouts of "Put him out!" rose from the hired *claque*. Dumas suspected the source of this interruption and in a moment he saw his unknown gentleman in the buff waistcoat being escorted from a box. This man was Charles Nodier, bibliophile and author, and one of the unknown playwrights who had concocted this very drama he was ridiculing.

Monday morning at ten thirty a new Dumas made his appearance at the Palais-Royal, and after inquiring his way of the porter, mounted to the right angle of the second court where the Secretariat of the Duc d'Orléans had its quarters. He was a new Dumas because he had had his hair cut. Meditation during the night on this subject had convinced him that he resembled one of those itinerant pomade-sellers. These fellows went about offering their own heads as their best advertisements. Shorn of his locks Dumas resembled a seal. He also turned his long coat over to a tailor requesting him to slice off about a foot. It had taken the young man but a single day to discover that he was somewhat behind the times in point of style. How much his experience at the theatre had to do with this renovation of his person should be obvious.

Dumas's heart beat violently as he entered the offices on the third floor of the Palais-Royal. There was no one there but some office boys who viewed him with that vulgar and importunate curiosity so peculiar to office boys. Dumas sat and waited, hat in hand. The boys filled ink-wells, made sly remarks about him, stumbled over his feet and then drifted away before the clerks who began to filter in. One of these clerks named Ernest showed Dumas the corner where he was to work. It was in a small room with three desks. The young man sat down before a desk on which had been placed paper, pens and ink. He felt extremely foolish. Just what this small bare room with its business-like atmosphere would do to him and his future was a mystery. It was an extremely small beginning for an ambitious youth who desired to have plays produced at the Théâtre-Français, and it might prove a *cul-de-sac* as well as a door to fame. The woodwork

*Palais-Royal, Street Front*

*A View Under the Arcade of the Palais-Royal*

was splintered and the windows were dusty. There were strange faces all about him. Downstairs in the court sounded many feet hurrying to the wooden galleries that lined the many offices. Dumas picked up his pen and prepared to copy letters.

He was interrupted several times during this first day. There was his *chef de bureau* to see, M. Oudard, a brusque, fair-minded man who welcomed him to his office and referred to the excellent recommendations given Dumas by General Foy and M. Deviolaine. Dumas had been unaware that the irascible Deviolaine, now installed in the Palais-Royal as Conservator of the duc's forests, had put in a good word for him, and he hurried to that growling gentleman's den to thank him. M. Deviolaine's temper was as furious as ever. He grumbled a welcome to Dumas, warned him against wasting his time on filthy plays and trashy verses, cursed him out and then offered him a loan if he needed it, and told him that he could dine at the Deviolaine home as often as he liked. He then added: "But now be off, you cub! You are making me waste time." Then there was M. de Broval. M. de Broval was the Duc d'Orléans' Director-General and he was punctilious about showing Dumas how to fold envelopes and write letters. The young man discovered that his duties were purely mechanical. He was to copy out in the finest handwriting the largest possible number of letters, and these, according to their importance, were to be signed by M. Oudard, M. de Broval or even by the Duc d'Orléans. This work was arranged by the chief clerk, Lassagne, who shared the little office with Dumas and Ernest. It was all simple enough and it left Dumas time in which to dream about his literary ventures.

Freed from his first day's labors Dumas wandered toward the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins. The city was peculiarly sweet in the twilight and the feeling that he was one of this myriad of people hastening home from shops and offices was strengthening to his pride. He had never felt this way while he had been in the employ of Maïtre Mennesson or M. Lefévre. There he had been a boy playing at being in business. Here he was on the humble rung of a ladder that might carry him anywhere. He passed the narrow lighted portico of the Théâtre-Français with a sigh of mingled aspiration and pleasure. For the first time he realized fully that he was now a citizen of Paris, that

its cafés and streets and theaters belonged to him, were to be a part of his daily life. Villers-Cotterets seemed very far away, the misty dream of a little town near a great forest.

At the Hôtel des Vieux-Augustins he gathered together his few garments and set out toward number one, Place des Italiens. He climbed the four flights, turned his key in the door and entered. His furniture had arrived and the wife of the concierge had put it in place. The lamplight cast a pleasant glow on the jaundiced wall-paper. It was his home and he sat down and gazed about him with an air of pleased pride. It was not much but it was a beginning, and more often than not the beginning was everything. He sat for a long time ruminating on the day's events, the pleasant manners of Lassagne, the cheerful face of Ernest, the brusque graciousness of M. Oudard, the fussy punctiliousness of M. de Broval, the bear-like manner of M. Deviolaine, the sheaves of white paper, the steady scratching of quill pens, the cries of clerks in the courts of the Palais-Royal, the little restaurant at the corner where he had lunched hastily with Lassagne and Ernest, the flower girls who strolled along the wooden galleries, the hawkers crying from every corner. A faint mist of loneliness, intangible, hardly sensed, crept about the small room. Was it his mother he wanted? What was it? He put on his hat and started forth for his dinner, and descending the first few steps from the fourth floor he stepped aside to let a plump little woman with a smiling face and bright hair pass. She entered the door opposite his own and as she entered she looked back. Dumas stood and observed the door for some minutes and then, whistling softly to himself, he proceeded on his way downward, crossed the Place des Italiens and steered a course toward the river. It would be fine to see the Seine flowing beneath its many bridges in the early evening and to pick out the squat towers of Notre Dame etched against the dark blue sky.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## SPRINGTIME OF A ROMANTICIST

### I

Lassagne, chief clerk of the small office wherein Dumas scribbled away with Ernest, was a young man of taste and literary inclinations. Endowed with an extremely slight creative power, he more than made up for the thinness of his talent by a sound comprehension of literary values. He was a critic and not to be taken in by the hollow fame of the more prominent men of the day. It was from him that Dumas received excellent advice as the two men became better acquainted and discovered the creative urge in one another. Next to de Leuven, Lassagne was the most important influence on the mind of the young greenhorn from Villers-Cotterets. He disabused Dumas of his easy faith in much-bruited names. He scorned M. Arnault and detested that old gentleman's pompous and turgid plays, *Germanicus* and *Marius à Minturnes*. Lucien Arnault he thought still worse and burst into a stifled guffaw at the mention of *Régulus*. M. de Jouy was impossible; M. Lemercier was beneath mention; M. Baour-Lormian was terrible. These men created their own reputations in the newspapers. Dumas's jaw dropped at this decisive iconoclasm. "If you want to write," said Lassagne, "do not take the literature of the Empire as your model." He pointed out the stilted and absurdly formalized technique of the older men, the ridiculous set speeches, the dry bastardization of Racine, the absence of blood and actual emotion, and the grumbling artificial oratory. Whom should the young man take as models, then? Lassagne shrugged his shoulders. The younger men, Soumet, Guiraud, Casimir Delavigne, Ancelot, possessed talent; Lamartine and Hugo were inspired poets. "The theater is humanity," said Lassagne. "I have said that our young

dramatic authors possess talent, that is, Soumet, Guiraud, Delavigne, Ancelot; but take heed of this, they belong solely to a period of transition; they are links which connect the chain of the past to the chain of the future, bridges which lead from what has been to what will be."

Dumas thought this over. Lassagne was prophesying a new era. The literature of the immediate future, the works to be written by those young men born beneath the suns of Austerlitz, would be a complete split with the past, a refusal of the ideas of the Empire, and a school in itself. What was it to be? Lassagne did not know. He did know that Dumas should imitate nobody. "Take passions, events, characters," he advised, "and smelt them all down in the furnace of your imagination." He was prophesying the romantic movement although he did not know it. He questioned Dumas as to his reading. The demoralized young man had read nobody. Lassagne advised him to read Shakespeare, Schiller, Molière, Terence, Plautus, Aristophanes, Goethe, Walter Scott and Cooper. Goethe would give him poetry; Walter Scott would give him character studies; Cooper would give him the mysterious grandeur of prairies, forests and oceans. "Ah," said the young man, "then a man who could be a poet like Goethe, an observer like Scott, and clever at description like Cooper, with the addition of passion . . ." "Would be almost perfect," ended Lassagne. They conversed in this way for some time while Dumas's quill pen hung suspended in mid-air. Suddenly Lassagne said, "France is waiting for the historical novel!" The thought had never entered the young man's head. He exclaimed, "But the history of France is so dull." At this moment the unborn ghosts of d'Artagnan, Athos, Aramis, Porthos, Chicot, Coconnas, Henri Quatre, Bussy d'Ambois, Queen Margot, Ange Pitou, La Mole, the Duc de Beaufort, Fouquet, Balsamo, the Chevalier de Maison-Rouge, Mauléon, Richelieu, and a hundred others stirred uneasily in the misty cavern of the future. "Dull!" shouted Lassagne. He stared with pity at the blushing clerk. "How do you know it is dull?" he asked. "People have told me so," replied Dumas. "People!" exclaimed Lassagne. "Read for yourself and find out." "What must I read?" "A whole world of books," answered Lassagne. "Joinville, Froissart, Monstrelet, Châtelain, Juvenal des Ursins, Montluc,

Saulx-Tavannes, l'Estoile, Cardinal de Retz, Saint-Simon, Villars, Madame de la Fayette, Richelieu. . . ." He strung off names until Dumas was dizzy with the sounding syllables. He know nothing about them. He was twenty-one years old and the entire history of France was a closed book to him.

Lassagne proceeded with his advice. He told Dumas what poetry he must read, Homer, Virgil, Dante among the ancients, and Ronsard, Mathurin Regnier, Milton, Goethe, Uhland, Byron, Lamartine, Victor Hugo and André Chenier among the moderns. Dumas, who had read nothing except a little Voltaire and a great deal of Parny, Bertin, Demoustier, Legouvé and Colardeau, heard these strange names and carefully wrote them down on the slip of paper which was already crowded with notations. He observed this list a little woefully, for it seemed to him that he would have to spend the rest of his life reading, that the time would never come when he would be equipped to write. The overwhelming sense of his ignorance shamed him. He resolved, however, to apply himself most intensively to this universe (for it was not less) that Lassagne had outlined for him. He discovered within a short time that he could copy without thinking of what he was copying, and this enabled him to ruminate on other matters while his pen scratched swiftly and neatly across page after page of paper. He began to dip into works of the authors suggested by Lassagne, and as he labored in his office he would recall to memory scenes from these works. He searched always for passions, for the lively movement and interplay of the emotions, and the vague conception of art which had so briefly stirred in his mind in Villers-Cotterets fluttered again. As yet he could not formulate it, but under the guidance of Lassagne he could recognize the falsities of the contemporary art of Paris, could see that it lacked the spark of life. Just what was needed he knew no more than Lassagne; but his mercurial intelligence was leading him toward the solution of the problem, a solution which he reached as soon as Victor Hugo did with the suppressed *Marion Delorme* and the sensational *Hernani*. Beside him was Lassagne, gentle-voiced and persuasive, pushing him forward through a labyrinth of literature and life, and within a few months the country boy was a country boy no longer. He was a Parisian.

Dumas's closest friend was still de Leuven, who was struggling without particular success to achieve an acceptance at some theatre. How could it be that de Leuven had never spoken of these great writers Lassagne knew by heart? Could it be that the failures of the son of the Swedish nobleman were in some way due to the young man's ignorance of them? Dumas remembered the old Baron's malicious little smile as he fed sugar to his roses. He decided to ask the young Swedish writer about this, but Adolphe was full of his own woes. He had recently written a drama in collaboration with Frédéric Soulié, and it had been refused at the Gymnase Theatre. Before this they had concocted from Walter Scott a drama called *Le Château de Kenilworth* that had a sudden demise. Adolphe, therefore, was fretting and fuming when Dumas reached his house. There was nothing to do but sit and listen to Adolphe's woes, and when the dinner hour arrived, to sit and listen to the entire Arnault family.

M. Arnault was not difficult to listen to. Subtle, mordant, and satirical he was an excellent example of the elder author and playwright born out of the discordancies of the Revolution into the thunder of the Empire. *Marius à Minturnes* had been produced in 1790 to the plaudits of the *sans-culottes* and among his other plays were *Lucrèce,* an abysmal failure, *Oscar,* an Ossianic tragedy dedicated to Bonaparte, *Les Vénitiens,* and *Germanicus.* He had resided in Paris through the Terror, known Danton, Desmoulins and the other leaders of that chaotic period, and followed Bonaparte to Egypt, been chief clerk at the Université during the Empire—one of his clerks being Béranger who wrote *Le Roi d'Yvetot* there—had been exiled in 1815, was fond of dogs and was extremely short-sighted and forgetful. He could talk excellently and the entrée to his home which Dumas obtained through the de Leuvens afforded the young man the greater part of his social converse during his first year in Paris. Outside of these homes he possessed very few places that would receive him. He was young and raw and without influence. He made the most, therefore, of the few friends he had.

Among them Frédéric Soulié, the collaborator with Adolphe of *Le Château de Kenilworth.* Soulié, born in 1800, was the first of the important men of his generation whom Dumas knew. He never

agreed with Soulié and Soulié never agreed with him but their literary antagonisms did not disturb their friendship. Soulié was in his early twenties when Dumas first met him, a lusty young man of medium height, with dark hair, eyebrows and beard, and with thick lips and white teeth. It was pleasant to drop into his chambers in the rue de Provence, to listen to his malicious bantering—for he thought little of Dumas at first—to eat cakes and drink tea, to sing ribald choruses, to discuss the future with the hodgepodge of visitors who circled about Soulié. There were also times when Soulié grew serious and declaimed from his poems and plays. He was versatile and turned out with some ease poetry, dramas and novels. None of this work was distinguished, but it was adequate for its time, and when Soulié died he left a little fame behind him, a fame based on such efforts as *Amours Françaises, Clothilde, Eulalie Pontois, Le Magnétiseur, Les Deux Cadavres* and *Les Mémoires du Diable.* He was one of the forerunners of the new literature but he lacked coordination; his technique was haphazard; his beginnings and endings pitiful; his exposition confused and obscure. But he was a dynamic character, sure of himself and with decided convictions. It was good for young Dumas to brush against him in verbal arguments, and although the youth hardly knew what he was talking about, the conversation often clarified his own thoughts and brought him closer to that cognizance of himself and what he desired to do. In Lassagne and de Leuven and Soulié he possessed three mentors who brought him varying things. Lassagne opened the doors of living literature to him. De Leuven spurred him to constant literary endeavors. Soulié impressed upon him the humility of his own ignorance. There was still a fourth friend who played no small part during this period.

This was a young doctor named Thibaut who possessed no practice and therefore had plenty of time to discuss literature and talk about the world. The way in which Dumas became acquainted with Thibaut throwns a light on the literary mannerisms of the day. During 1823 and 1824 it was the fashion to suffer from chest complaints. Poets, particularly, were consumptive; it was excellent form to expectorate blood after each emotion and to die to soft music before reaching the age of thirty. Dumas was tall and thin and so was Adolphe de Leuven. They were both poetically-minded so they

decided to be consumptive. Picture Dumas, then, walking gloomily along the rue de Richelieu, coughing delicately now and then into a handkerchief. The hacking quality of this cough rose in ratio to the pulchritude of the young ladies who passed. It was natural enough to call on a doctor. Thibaut was the victim in this case, victim because Dumas had no money wherewith to pay his bill. But Thibaut liked the young man, saw the awakening of something real in him, rather pooh-poohed the bloodless cough—for try as hard as he could Dumas might split the handkerchief but he could produce no blood—and took the potential playwright with him to the *Hôpital de la Charité.* There Dumas picked up some knowledge of anatomy and lung diseases, enough in fact to aid him materially with his novel, *Amaury,* some years later. Thibaut, who appears to have known a little about everything, undertook Dumas's education in various ways and for a brief period they passed many evenings together in a small room in the rue du Pélican which overlooked the passage Vero-Dodat. There they studied physics and chemistry, and Dumas first learned about the poisons which Madame de Villefort used in *Monte Cristo.* A coquettish young milliner named Mademoiselle Walker sometimes took part in these physiological studies. Dumas by this time was reading assiduously. After some boggling at Scott he developed a genuine love for him; he devoured the translated work of Cooper; he formed a real passion for Lord Byron. With Thibaut to give him science, Soulié criticism, de Leuven ambition and Lassagne passion, Dumas in a single year traveled a tremendous distance from the bird-snares of Villers-Cotterets.

His progress at the Palais-Royal was satisfactorily enough so far as the estimate of his superiors went. He worked easily with Ernest. Lassagne had become a personal friend. M. Oudard maintaintd his impartial but courteous supervision, and M. de Broval appeared rarely. He had even seen, talked with and done special work for the Duc d'Orléans. The duc at that time was about fifty years old, exceedingly stout, with a bright and intelligent eye, affable though slightly withdrawn in the true aristocratic manner, and when he was in the mood given to singing in a voice atrociously off-key. Dumas's handwriting pleased him and the young man was called in occasionally to the private offices to copy special matter from the dic-

tation of the future Louis-Philippe. Dumas had an extra duty which he shared with Ernest. The duc lived in Neuilly and every evening one of the young men was despatched there with the evening papers and any personal letters that may have arrived late. This material was presented to the duc who, after glancing through it, dictated his orders for the next day. The trip was irksome because it took two hours out of the evening, from eight to ten, and therefore it was impossible for the messenger to go to any play except the one at the Théâtre-Français which was next door to the Palais-Royal. Fortunately there were free tickets for the Théâtre-Français, M. Oudard having three a day at his disposal, and Dumas was soon acquainted with the repertoire and present at all new productions shortly after the opening night. The craze for the theatre was upon him. He talked, ate and slept drama and as his four friends were in the same bemused condition it was natural that his creative impulses should wholly tend that way.

Dumas had changed in appearance during the months at the Palais-Royal. His hair was not as long as a pomade peddler's nor as short as a seal's. His coat fitted properly; a foppish note of color crept into his gilets; his trousers hung gracefully over well polished and pointed boots. In the evening he wore a cape *à la* Byron. He carried a cane, walked bareheaded, assumed a melancholy expression and no longer encouraged quarrels with the *claques*. His incursions upon the social evenings of the de Leuvens and the Arnaults gave him a certain degree of *savoir faire*. As he was naturally bright, spontaneously witty and quick to comprehend, he pleased. During his free hours he continued to collaborate with Adolphe, and several vaudevilles and dramas began to assume a somewhat inchoate stature on paper. He was also writing poetry and it is obvious that he considered himself primarily a poet, a dramatic poet, at this time. As yet his creative endeavors were too meager to conflict with his clerical work. However, he was underpaid and understood that he must supplement his wages by outside work of some sort. Most of the clerks found it impossible to live on the pittance reluctantly turned over to them by the thrifty duc. Some of them had married sempstresses who added their earnings to the common fund. Others acted as waiters in thirty-

two sous restaurants on the Left Bank. Dumas wanted to double his income by writing successful plays.

On January 1, 1824, he was promoted from supernumerary clerk at twelve hundred francs a year to the post of regular clerk, an appointment bringing in fifteen hundred francs. For a short while the three hundred extra francs a year dazzled him. He considered his state to be flourishing and wrote to Madame Dumas, reminding her of her promise to sell out the *bureau de tabac* in Villers-Cotterets and join him as soon as he was definitely settled in Paris and his fortunes appeared to be waxing. Madame Dumas, to whom three hundred francs seemed a very great amount indeed, consented and started negotiations for the disposal of her little shop. She sold it and the greater part of her shabby furniture, and wrote to her son that she would arrive with her bedstead, a chest of drawers, a table, new armchairs, four chairs and a hundred louis in cash. A hundred louis! Dumas was amazed and delighted. It was double his own year's income and meant that they should have twenty-four hundred francs a year for the next two years. He needed this extra money as we shall see, for an event important both to Dumas and to the future of French drama was about to transpire.

The love which Dumas bore his mother was unquestionable. Though in the heedlessness of youth he might neglect her the quality and profundity of his affection was never in doubt. It is possible that he dramatized himself somewhat even in this passion as he dramatized his life throughout his career. He was always his own best audience and his greatest play was himself. A vanity that was child-like and negroid possessed him, the sort of vanity that caused his son to say years later: "My father is so vain that he is not above mounting behind his own carriage so that people will think he possesses a negro footman." This vanity was curbed in his youth. It needed success and public adulation to bring it out. When he did blossom he blossomed as does some exotic flower from the tropics which spreads its enormous scarlet petals to the warm sun. His love for his mother was a brightly hued petal. He loved to expatiate on it in later years, to burst into tears at the thought of it. And while it seemed slightly maudlin to colder-blooded folk it was nevertheless reasonable enough in a man whose blood was Latin and negroid.

Dumas hardly ever rationalized; to think of an emotion was immediately to be a part of it, to enter into it, to quiver, sigh and exhaust oneself with the delicate furore of it. Madame Dumas, for her part, worshipped her son and possibly, with the tenacious combativeness of the mother, she worshipped him all the more because he was so constantly decried by worthy neighbors and gossips. They saw no more than a pushing youngster; she saw a pulsing ambition that was resistless. When the gossips warned her against leaving Villers-Cotterets for the uncertainty of Paris she said nothing. Her son would look out for her.

On the twenty-ninth of July, 1824, the event important both to Dumas and the future of the French drama took place. As he himself proudly put it: "Whilst the Duc de Montpensier came into the world at the Palais-Royal, a Duc de Chartres was born to me at number one Place des Italiens." In other words, he had a son, that Alexandre Dumas *fils* who was to write *La Dame aux Camélias* and *Le Demi-Monde*. It happened naturally enough. Opposite his fourth-floor room and across the landing was a door. Behind this door lived Marie-Catherine Lebay, a short and blond young sempstress, who had separated from her husband and come from Rouen to make her way in the capital. She was not pretty but she was charming. It was this young woman Dumas passed on the stairs the first evening at number one Place des Italiens. They had passed each other often on the stairs in the days following. Bright looks had given place to smiles; smiles had developed into greetings; greetings had enlarged to conversations. It was not long before the young man was invited from his single room papered with jaundiced-yellow to the larger quarters of Marie-Catherine. She possessed two rooms. The solitariness of the two young people did its work. Dumas, when he was not with de Leuven or Thibaut or at some performance at the Théâtre-Français, was with Marie-Catherine. They dined in the cheap little restaurants of the Palais-Royal or she cooked some simple meal in her rooms. She was bright, cheerful, anxious to joke at life, and she listened in awe to the roseate future the young man prophesied. He thrilled her with names. He had talked to the Duc d'Orléans that day. He had seen the King come from the Tuileries. He was fat and white and

lethargic and he had leaned back in his heavy coach. There was death in his face. M. de Broval had a large red nose and sometimes he almost folded it into his envelope. Marie-Catherine would laugh at this.

Then they would walk along the quais where M. Villenave, the old bibliophile, poked through the dusty bibelots and quartos and folios, and that sweet twilight of Paris which is unlike any other twilight in the world would descend along the river, and Notre Dame, the Institute, the Louvre would assume a clear quiet color that transformed them into buildings out of a dream. The ardent nature of young Dumas would respond quickly to the smiles and bird-like mannerisms of Marie-Catherine. They walked hand in hand. And one evening when they had climbed the four steep flights of stairs and reached the little landing Dumas did not turn into his own room.

After that the jaundiced-yellow papered room and the two chambers opposite ceased to be different dwellings. There was only one apartment, a three-room apartment, four flights up at number one Place des Italiens. It was the habit of the day. Young men, clerks, poets, dramatists, possessed their small ménages unblessed by the soutaned priest. These young people passed their brief springtimes together, shook hands and parted, achieved fame and made advantageous marriages. If they remembered each other at all it was with a half smile and a tear. It was the first Bohemia, the legendary land of Henri Murger. With light hearts these *enfants du siècle* gazed back from more spacious chambers to the little rooms where they had weathered life so long with their young mistresses and made a mock of life and all its cares. Béranger understood.

For Dumas this addition to his ménage meant renewed worries over the future. His mother was on her way from Villers-Cotterets with her furniture and a hundred louis. It would be necessary to find quarters for her also, and he spent many long days tramping through the streets in the neighborhood of the Palais-Royal searching for rooms that would be both satisfactory and cheap. He found them at last at fifty-three Faubourg St. Denis in a house adjoining the *Lion d'Argent.* There, for three hundred and fifty francs a year he secured two rooms. His mother arrived with her furniture, moved in and was

delighted. Dumas ostensibly dwelt with her, although the greater part of his free time was passed at the Place des Italiens where Marie-Catherine was nursing his child. He now had two ménages to support on his fifteen hundred francs a year. It seemed an impossible task but he determined to succeed with the aid of plays. He had two or three of these efforts in hand with de Leuven, but de Leuven had failed in collaboration with Soulié, and it began to be obvious that a third collaborator was needed, one with practical knowledge of the contemporary Parisian theatre and some sort of entrance there. It was not that de Leuven lacked application. He had written a *Bon Vieillard* which had been refused at the Gymnase; his *Pauvre Fille* had been rejected at the Vaudeville; *Le Château de Kenilworth* had not even been considered at the Porte-Saint-Martin where a play on the same subject had just been presented. De Leuven's failure was possibly due to an inability on his part to spot and work up situations which actually were "theater." He was too timid, too safe.

So while the two young men searched for a third "practical" collaborator they continued to block out their ideas. Dumas settled his mother at fifty-three Faubourg St. Denis and then hurried off to Marie-Catherine and the child who had been named Alexandre. It was just as well to give him a famous name at the start. Madame Dumas scoured her little apartment, formed an acquaintance with M. Després who lived next door and was dying of consumption, and waited with some degree of tremulous calmness for her son's triumphs. She had experienced so many disappointments and sorrows that she was a trifle uneasy about these prophesied triumphs, but her son's ebullience overcame her misgivings. He procured theater tickets from M. Oudard, Adolphe and M. Arnault, and plunged her into a week of play-going. The poor widow who had witnessed no more than half a dozen dramas during her lifetime was entranced. Perhaps, after all, things would turn out well. In the meantime the hundred louis she had brought with her dwindled away, on new curtains, clothes for the baby, a gilet for her son, a dozen and one unexpected trifles. The roar of Paris was about her and she was somewhat bewildered. Her heart, which had always beat a little too fast, weakened as the time crept along.

At this time while Alexandre Dumas *fils* was wailing in his cradle

and M. de Chateaubriand was being ejected from the ministry for his opposition to the re-established censorship, Destiny who treats all impartially wrote out a brusque order concerning Louis XVIII. One morning, the twelfth of September, 1824, two bulletins were issued from the Tuileries, making it known that the King's illness was incurable and that he had not long to live. Louis-Stanislas-Xavier, Comte de Provence, and by the grace of Talleyrand, King of France, was suffering from mortification of the legs. The Bourse and the theaters were closed and the populace of Paris passively awaited the end. The bulletins issued from the Tuileries were the first that France had read since the death of Louis XV. They were also the last. On the sixteenth of the month at four o'clock in the morning the King died, and as the death-sheet was being drawn over his face the herald-at-arms turned to the Comte d'Artois, brother of the dead man, and exclaimed: "The King is dead! Long live the King!" Charles X walked from the room, assisting the weeping Duchesse d'Angoulème. In this way a King who had retained his throne through a vacillating policy made way for a King who was to lose his throne because of a tyrannous royalism.

Dumas was not so absorbed in politics at this time as he was to be six years later when his patron, Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans, was to mount the dangerous throne as Louis-Philippe. He observed the funeral cortège with calm eyes as it wound its way to Saint-Denis; he read Chateaubriand's *Le Roi est Mort! Vive le Roi!* and thought it poor stuff; he absorbed *Les Funérailles de Louis XVIII,* an ode by a stocky young man named Hugo, and considered it wonderful; he heard that the Marquis de la Fayette was making a triumphal tour of the United States of America and wondered vaguely about that far-away land; he saw from the journals that Lamartine had been rejected by the Academy and that a gentleman named Droz had been elected. So the year 1824 came to an end.

On January 3, 1825, Tallancourt, a retired Napoleonic soldier, gave a dinner at the Palais-Royal to Dumas and another soldier of the Empire named Betz. Tallencourt had recently been appointed to the Duc d'Orléans' library and the dinner was to celebrate this appointment. The three men dined well and then adjourned to the

Café Hollandais to smoke a cigar. Dumas, who detested tobacco (unless it were served up in some exotic shape as in a narghileh) and tobacco cafés, went with them reluctantly. He was clad in a large cloak, one of those romantic items of the day rejoicing in the name of a Quiroga, and when he swept into the café, properly Byronic in all his gestures, he annoyed one of the habitués who was at that moment playing billiards. The annoyed gentleman looked at Dumas's voluminous cloak, leaned over the billiard table and said something to his antagonist, whereupon both players, glancing in the young man's direction, burst into raucous laughter. Dumas flew into a fury and seizing a cue mixed up the balls on the table while he said to his astonished Napoleonic soldiers, "Who would like to play billiards with me?" The usual results followed, cards were exchanged, a time and place fixed, and Dumas was scheduled for his first duel.

There were elements of comedy in this combat.

Tallancourt and Betz, uncertain of the raw youth's qualities, took him to a shooting gallery where the young man proceeded to pepper a *poupée* in proper style. He had not hunted in the forests about Villers-Cotterets for nothing. Tallancourt looked at Betz and smiled, and Betz gazed back at Tallancourt with an air of satisfaction. Then the two, acting as seconds for Dumas, called on the annoyed gentleman's aides and discovered that the antagonist had chosen swords. *"Ma foi!"* muttered Tallancourt, "This is different." He pictured Dumas run through the stomach. But Dumas reassured him and explained that old Mounier had taught him the art of fence. He even made some fiery gestures in the air, illustrating what tremendous lunges he knew and how well he could guard himself. Tallancourt scratched his ear and said nothing.

On the way home Dumas suffered a reversal of feeling. His bravery oozed from him. He thought of his mother, of Alexandre *fils*, of Marie-Catherine, of his future, and began to wish that he were well out of the mess into which his vanity had plunged him. He remained with his mother all evening and was extremely quiet. If only his heart would stop beating so furiously. He was sure that his mother could hear it. He went to bed and slept restlessly. At eight o'clock in the morning—it was a cold, bitter day with snow on the ground—he rose, wrapped his father's sword in his Quiroga, and set forth for

the Hôtel de Nantes, near which his encounter was to take place. The four seconds were there but the antagonist was decidedly missing. Nine o'clock passed. Ten o'clock. Eleven o'clock. Still no antagonist. Dumas, who had eaten no breakfast, experienced a plaintive gnawing at his stomach. Tallancourt who did not want to lose his new position through tardiness, was cross and impatient. The cold began to numb their fingers and feet. It seemed there were drawbacks about the romantic life. At length Dumas was sent along to the Palais-Royal to resume his copying, and the four seconds scurried off in search of the missing man. When Tallancourt came in, some half hour later, he explained that the antagonist had forgotten to get up. He had been skating on the canal most of the day before and had a pain in his back. His disgusted seconds withdrew immediately. But Tallancourt and Betz insisted on a duel and it had been arranged for the next day in one of the Montmartre quarries near the Rochechouart barrier. Dumas groaned. He decided that his seconds were too officious.

In the morning he was at the Rochechouart barrier and there, worse luck, was his antagonist. The sight of six men walking solemnly into the Montmartre quarry drew a group of loafers who stood about offering obnoxious advice. Dumas discovered that his sword was two inches shorter than the one carried by his adversary. This did not make him feel any better. He flung off his coat and putting himself on guard strove to out-glare his opponent. But that individual had ideas of his own and demanded that Dumas remove both his gilet and his shirt. This seemed exorbitant to Dumas for it was a fearfully cold day but, as the opponent insisted, he thrust the point of his sword into the snow and flung off his upper garments. Then he took his pose again and his trousers, lacking the necessary support of braces, started to slip down. This threatened defalcation of a necessary garment was adjusted much to the delight of the congregated loafers. Dumas was excessively angry by this time and without more ado began the attack. His opponent guarded himself so carelessly that, after a few passes, Dumas lowered his weapon and said: "Defend yourself, monsieur!" "What if I do not choose to put myself into a position of defence?" replied his adversary with a furious scowl. The magnificence of this retort left Dumas speechless and he thrust

out at him. The adversary leaped backward, stumbled over a frozen root, and fell head over heels into the snow. "Oh! Oh!" shouted Tallancourt, "Have you killed him with the first pass?" "I barely touched him!" replied Dumas bitterly. The adversary's seconds, rushing forward, solved the peculiar acrobatic leap in which he had indulged. When Dumas had thrust his sword into the snow while removing his gilet and shirt the tip had frozen and this frozen tip, touching the antagonist's shoulder, had startled him so that he had performed a back somersault. This ended the duel. Dumas donned his shirt and gilet, tightened up his trousers, flung his Quiroga about him, and descended the ramparts of Montmartre with a lighter heart than he had ascended them.

He was to have other duels during his life and not all of them were to be as comical as this first venture upon the life militant. He was to face danger and face it with actual courage, or at least the aspect of courage. At the same time, he was never to plunge too close to the cannon's mouth. He himself has stated in his *Mémoires* that he believed every man, especially if endowed with sensitive organizations, naturally fears danger, and if left to his own instincts, would do his best to escape it; he is kept back simply and solely by moral strength and manly pride. There is another quality that over-rides cowardice, which Dumas did not mention, and that is vanity. After a young man had fought his first duel in the Paris of the 1820s he may be said to have cut his eye-teeth and ceased to be a student of life. He had entered into life. Dumas had now entered into life, and though he dramatized his existence by such ridiculous accessories as a faked consumptive cough, a Quiroga, and a fire-eating attitude, he was, at bottom, real enough. He possessed a born romantic temperament and what others had to learn by difficult study and laborious rationalization came naturally to him. It is a temperament with flaws and there were indubitably grave flaws in Dumas, his vanity, his polygamous proclivities, his intoxication with himself, his occasional bland ignoring of the integrities of authorship, his posing, his oratorical nature; but all of these were excrescences on a veritable nature that was unique and quick with an enormous vitality. Michelet was to write years later to Dumas, "I love you and admire you because you are one of the forces of nature." In the young man of 1825 may be discovered that

force of nature, quiescent as yet but decipherable at odd moments.

While Paris was becoming crowded with foreign celebrities for the coronation ceremonies of Charles X, de Leuven and Dumas settled upon a third collaborator to assist them with their plays. His name was Rousseau and he was always drunk. He was not related to the famous Jean-Jacques. Prince Esterhazy came from Austria. Spain sent the Duc de Ville-Hermosa. Great Britain despatched the Duke of Northumberland. From Prussia came General de Zastrow. The Prince Volkonski arrived from Russia. Charles X announced: "Nothing is changed in France, there is simply one more Frenchman in it." At the Palais-Royal there was a constant state of fête. His Majesty Charles X had graciously granted the title of Royal Highness (Son Altesse Royale) to the Duc d'Orléans. Rousseau slept through all this. People died. On June twenty-sixth Pauline Bonaparte, Princess Borghese, breathed her last in Florence. The memory of embroidered slippers on tiny feet flashed through Dumas's romantic mind. Alexandre *fils* was almost a year old. Rousseau lamented the death of Louis XVIII by getting drunk. He celebrated the succession of Charles X by getting drunker. He was the true Bohemian. When he possessed nine bottles of brandy he was surrounded by the Nine Muses.

De Leuven and Dumas set out through the crowded streets in search of Rousseau. They carried as bait several bottles of good old Bordeaux, three flasks of rum and some loose sugar. They found Rousseau in the rue du Petit-Carreau. He sat gazing out of a window and he lifted his blood-shot eyes in faint amazement when his two visitors entered. He saw the bottles and welcomed his guests. It is time to enlarge upon Rousseau.

Rousseau, as has been intimated, belonged to that famous company which included Villon and later, Favart, Désaugiers and Armand Gouffé, men who never worked except to the pop of corks. All sorts of quaint stories about Rousseau circulated through the literary circles of Paris. He had, for example, engraved upon his memory the name of a certain police officer, and neither brandy nor wine nor rum nor punch could wipe it out. Rousseau staggering, Rousseau stuttering, Rousseau tight, Rousseau drunk, Rousseau dead drunk, Rousseau

unable to remember his mother's name or his own name or his own address or the country in which he lived clung tenaciously to the name of that police officer. Whenever he was helpless he called for assistance and ordered that he be taken to that unfortunate guardian of the law. The worried policeman would then lead Rousseau home. Sometimes he carried him. Once Rousseau passed a restaurant called *Les Deux Singes* (The Two Apes). It was after midnight but he rang until an irritated waiter came down. "I must see the proprietor," hiccupped Rousseau. The proprietor got out of bed, dressed and came to the door. "What is it?" he asked, thinking that some one in his family had died. "I wish to speak to your partner," stuttered Rousseau. "Partner? I have no partner," exclaimed the proprietor. "Then why do you put on your sign—the Two Apes?" inquired Rousseau. "I think that is cheating the public." Another time an heroic friend strove to lead the inebriated Rousseau home. Rousseau's legs proved traitors. The friend gave up the unequal struggle, laid the unconscious dramatist down in front of a fruiterer's shop, placed a lantern beside him, and departed saying, "Sleep in peace, son of Epicurus. No one will trample upon you." In the morning when Rousseau awoke he found five or six sous in his hand, placed there by kind souls who had thought him a poor wandering outcast.

But in spite of his drunkenness Rousseau had talent. He could invent witty and clever lines. He could write engaging farces and vaudevilles. In other words, he knew the secret of sprightly dialogue. It was for this reason that Dumas and de Leuven, aware that something was lacking in their own efforts, sought him out. Rousseau welcomed them and permitted them to bear him off to Adolphe's new chambers in the rue de la Bruyère. There the young men set him down and proceeded to read in turn to him their collected works. When they looked up Rousseau was sound asleep and snoring on the couch. They roused him and he asked permission to take their scripts with him, two melodramas and three comic operas. He would read them carefully and deliver an opinion within a few days. The young men watched him lurch out with some misgivings. "Will he return or not?" asked Dumas. "We will invite him to dinner and at the foot of the invitation write 'there will be two bottles of champagne,'" replied Adolphe.

Rousseau did make his appearance at dinner and explained that neither the melodramas nor the comic operas pleased him. The melodramas were borrowed from well known novels and the comic operas were founded on ideas that were dull from beginning to end. Dumas was discouraged but Adolphe's faith in himself was fortified by a doubt of Rousseau. "He has not read them," he whispered to Dumas, while Rousseau was emptying the second bottle of champagne. This might be true and it helped to restore Dumas's confidence. He began to tell tales about his youth in Villers-Cotterets, about old Hiraux and his violin, about Mounier and his pierced uvula, about the Parisians who came to the forest on hunting expeditions. There was the case of M. Arnault, author of *Marius à Minturnes,* who had come to hunt in the Tillet Wood. He had been given a good position and, as he was extremely short-sighted, he had seated himself on the ground. He drew a note-book from his pocket and started a fable. Soon he heard a rustling in the wood. He laid down his note-book, picked up his gun and vaguely aimed it in the direction of the sound. "Oh, monsieur," a woman's voice cried out, "don't shoot! You will kill my cow." M. Arnault cleared his throat and courteously replied, "Are you quite sure it is your cow and not a roebuck?" "Oh, Monsieur, you will see. . . ." And the woman, running up to the cow, pulled vigorously at the poor beast's tail until it emitted a loud doleful moo. "You are right," said M. Arnault. "I think I am mistaken." He sat down on the ground and returned to his fable.

Rousseau slapped his thigh.

"What do you mean by telling such capital stories as that and yet amusing yourself by cribbing melodramas from Florian and tales from M. Bouilly?" he inquired. "Why, in the story you have just related there is the fruitful seed of a comedietta. I christen it *La Chasse et l'Amour.*"

Adolphe ordered a third bottle of champagne.

"You have character there," went on Rousseau, "a short-sighted sportsman. We will have him pepper the gaiters of his prospective father-in-law. He will mistake them for a deer's legs."

Pencils, pens and ink were secured and within an hour Rousseau, Adolphe and Dumas had drawn up a complete scenario of *La Chasse*

*et l'Amour.* The scenario was divided into three parts, Dumas being assigned the first, Rousseau the second and Adolphe the third. The play was finished in a week. Its leading character was a ridiculous, green-spectacled Parisian sportsman and the usual love interest was pushed to its completion through a series of comic mishaps. Dumas outdid himself in a song which he put in the mouth of the sportsman:

*La terreur de la perdrix*
*Et l'effroi de la bécasse,*
*Pour mon adresse à la chasse,*
*On me cite dans Paris.*
*Dangereux comme une bombe,*
*Sous mes coups rien qui ne tombe,*
*Le cerf comme la colombe . . .*
*A ma seule vue, enfin,*
*Tout le gibier a la fièvre;*
*Car, pour mettre à bas un lièvre,*
*Je suis un fameux lapin!*

Having finished the play the next thing to do was to place it. The first theater approached was the Gymnase where both Adolphe and Rousseau were in favor with M. Poirson. Dumas, his pride to the fore and his desire still to make his début by some great and astounding production, permitted his name to be erased from the script. It was offered, therefore, under the names of De Leuven and Rousseau. No sooner was it offered than it was rejected. A consultation of the young men followed immediately and a conclusion was reached that their masterpiece might have a better fortune at one of the humbler boulevard theaters. *La Chasse et l'Amour* was then submitted to M. Waretz at the Ambigu-Comique. It was accepted with acclamations and within a week rehearsals were called.

Dumas was in the seventh heaven. He discovered that his one-third rights would be four francs and two free seats a performance. This was no fortune, but it was a beginning and it was as much as he was earning at the Palais-Royal. At the same time, money would be welcome for Alexandre *fils* needed new clothes and Madame Dumas's hundred louis had melted away. Rousseau sobered up

sufficiently to introduce Dumas to a ticket broker named Porcher who purchased authors' free seats in advance and Dumas turned over to him his two seats per performance for the run of *La Chasse et l'Amour* for the sum of fifty francs. Porcher was an institution in Paris. He did more in his time to help out penniless young playwrights than the Minister of the Interior and the Director of Beaux-Arts together. During the twenty-five years that he loaned money to authors on their prospects at least five hundred thousand francs passed from his pockets into their hands. Dumas, his first fifty francs' earnings as a playwright jingling in his pocket, ran home to tell the good news to his mother.

On September 22, 1825, *La Chasse et l'Amour* was produced at the Ambigu-Comique theater to the manifest delight of an audience that immediately took to its heart the green-spectacled hunter, played by a comic mime named Dubourjal. The play was published within a month or so by Duvernois as by MM. Rousseau, Adolphe and Davy. Dumas, apparently, did not want the authorities at the Palais-Royal to know that he was dabbling in this sort of playwriting. Just why de Leuven permitted the use of his first name only on the title-page is a mystery. Perhaps it was to balance his last name which had been on the play-bills. Dumas, sitting at the back of the theatre and hearing the applause, tasted and savoured the sweetness of his first success. These comic figures moving upon the stage had been created by him. That song of the hunter which aroused so much laughter had been spun from his own brain. It was true that this had been only a humble effort, that it could not be compared with Lucien Arnault's *Régulus,* for example, that there were no lines in it like Lucien's stirring *"Quand le héros finit, le demi-dieu commence,"* but there was laughter and movement in it, and it was a beginning.

At the very opening of his career Dumas indulged in a type of collaboration he was to employ throughout his life. Years later this was to arouse the excoriating attacks of the malevolent Jacquot. Dumas furnished the idea and collaborators aided him in whipping it into shape. *La Chasse et l'Amour* was a very small start, then, but it was enough to whet Dumas's appetite for further ventures of the same sort. He felt the spirit of creation rise within him, and he finished three tales upon which he had been working desultorily.

General Foy, his old patron, died, and the young man burst into a long turgid ode which was printed at once by Setier with a title-page reading, *Élégie sur la mort du general Foy, par Alex. Dumas.* This sixteen page pamphlet was the first of those hundreds of volumes to bear the name of Dumas, and it pleased him so much he decided to follow it with a volume containing the three tales. Porcher, recognizing in the young man a future profitable customer, advanced Dumas a hundred crowns. He took this money and the tales to Setier, and two days later he was correcting the proofs of *Nouvelles Contemporaines,* a two hundred and seventeen page book containing three stories, *Laurette, Blanche de Beaulieu,* and *Marie,* bearing the epigraph, *"Fils d'un soldat, j'aime à choisir mes héros dans les rangs de l'armée,"* and with this dedication: *"A ma Mère, hommage d'amour, de respect et de reconnaissance."* When the book appeared it sold exactly four copies and obtained one review, a piece in *Figaro* signed by Étienne Arago. Dumas, a little dumbfounded by this, did not lose hope. Lassagne had offered to collaborate with him on a play.

M. Oudard walked up and down his office in an angry manner.

The tall young man in front of him continued to talk in a forcible and emphatic tone. "I am not M. Casimir Delavigne's age," he said. "I have not received the education which M. Casimir Delavigne had at one of the best colleges in Paris. No, I am only twenty-two years old; I am educating myself every day at the cost of my health; I learn when other people are fast asleep or amusing themselves. So I cannot produce work like M. Casimir Delavigne's. But, M. Oudard, I ask you to listen carefully to this: if I did not believe I could do different work in years to come than M. Casimir Delavigne's I should meet you and M. de Broval half-way and take a solemn oath never to touch literature again."

The young man held his head very high when he walked from the room but he could not keep the tears from his eyes. He flung himself down at his desk and started to work with that angry industry which is so often the result of an outraged energy. One page. Two pages. The quill pen scratched over the surface of the paper. Because he had had a play produced! His name had not even been on the play. And because he was writing another play with Lassagne! The office

snoopers were at work, jealous clerks who were incapable of anything but scribbling or waiting on table in cheap restaurants. Three pages. Four pages. M. Oudard, indeed! "Your scribbling proclivities, Monsieur, will interfere with your clerical duties!" Really! The flower girls on the wooden galleries of the Palais-Royal were chattering like magpies. "I forbid you to work with Lassagne." This was the way with all pompous gentlemen in authority. The Palais-Royal did not want a clerk whose name crept into the papers. He looked up at the head clerk.

"They have forbidden me to write plays with you, Lassagne."

The frank glance met his.

"They have forbidden me to help you with your playwriting, Dumas."

The young men smiled.

Their collaboration, already finished, rested in the office of the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre, *La Noce et l'Enterrement.* Dumas had found the theme in *The Arabian Nights.* It was a comic farce interspersed with songs and concerned a French valet, masquerading as a nobleman, who came to an island where it was the law to bury husbands with their wives and *vice versa.* Clever, amusing trash.

"They want me to write like Casimir Delavigne," said Dumas to Lassagne.

"Why not Népomucène Lemercier?" inquired the head clerk.

It was five o'clock and they put on their hats and left the office. From his window M. Oudard watched the tall form of Dumas striding along through the court of the Palais-Royal. He muttered to himself:

"I think that young man has revolutionary tendencies."

*La Noce et l'Enterrement,* by MM. Lassagne, Dumas and Vulpian (Vulpian being a play doctor called in by Lassagne to aid in finishing the piece), was produced November 21, 1826, at the Porte-Saint-Martin theatre, a comic actor named Serres making his début in the role of the parvenue lackey, Casimir Floriment. Did Dumas think of Delavigne when he gave this ridiculous character his first name? Dumas's name, as in the case of *La Chasse et l'Amour,* was not on the bills, although the printed play when issued in this same year

carried the name Davy. Dumas and his mother witnessed the première from seats in the orchestra and the warm response of the audience flooded him again with that delicious sense of triumph which overwhelms young men when their first roses are flung at their feet by admiring throngs. However, Providence placed a stout *bourgeois* at his left who rose with a grunt when the curtain fell, fumbled for his hat, and mumbled to Dumas: "Come, come, it isn't such stuff as this that will uphold the theater." The young dramatist discreetly preserved his incognito and agreed with him dolefully. *"La Noce et l'Enterrement"* served its purpose. It ran for some forty performances and the money which Dumas received aided him materially in getting through the difficult winter of 1826.

The young man was also a poet.

It was not alone the *Élégie sur la mort du general Foy* that revealed him in this light. During 1826 he contributed to the pages of an obscure periodical called *Psyche*. There was *La Néréide. Élégie antique,* for example.

*Entends ma voix, ô blanche Néréide!*
*Le souffle de la nuit a rafraîchi les airs.*
*Le ciel est pur, et ma barque rapide*
*Rase, comme Alcyon, la surface des mers.*

and so on, for twelve stanzas. There was *L'Adolescent Malade,* beginning:

*Un réveil douloureux a rouvert ma paupière;*
*Ma mère . . . où donc es-tu? Viens vite auprès de moi;*
*Ne quitte plus ton fils: il a sur cette terre*
*Si peu d'instants encore à rester avec toi!*

Following hard upon this was *L'Aigle Blessé,* opening:

*Un aigle, échappé de son aire,*
*Fixait sur le soleil son oeil audacieux; . . .*
*Mais tandis qu'il planait au séjour du tonnere,*

*La flèche d'un chasseur l'atteignit dans les cieux,*
*L'aigle blessé retomba sur la terre!*

Then there were *Romance, Souvenirs,* and *Le Poète.*

This work is more curious than important, but it reveals a sensitive nature striving somewhat oratorically toward self-expression. Dumas was never a real poet. He could neither command the technique nor discipline himself sufficiently. His occasional verses were merely the outlet for his own rich nature and except during a brief period of these early years he never set great store by them. Once, years later when he was editing *"Le Mousquetaire,"* a young versifier brought him some execrable lines. He read them and said, "My poor friend, your rhymes are not very rich (*très riche*)," and then, noticing the crestfallen look on the youthful bard's face, he added hastily, "but they are quite well off (*à leur aise!*)." This criticism might apply to Dumas's own poetry. He was always one of the easiest and most free of authors.

The year 1826 passed, then, to the encouraging spectacle of a second slight production, a handful of poems *à leur aise,* and an increasing distrust of the young man at the Palais-Royal. Dumas understood that matters were approaching a climax, that the first production which appeared under his own name would embroil him with M. Oudard and M. de Broval. This, however, did not trouble him. He was filled with bright ideas and gigantic plans that would carry him far from his clerical duties for the Duc d'Orléans. His mind was made up. Like Fernando Cortez he had burned his boats behind him. If he could not succeed as a literary figure (and at this time he meant as dramatist solely) then he would fail ingloriously as a clerk. He cast about for a new collaborator and his eye lighted on Frédéric Soulié.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE BAPTISM OF A MAN

### I

Among the important productions in Paris during the year 1823 were Casimir Bonjour's *L'Éducation ou les Deux Cousines* and Guiraud's *Comte Julien*. Neither play is worth remembering for itself alone. Bonjour's drama was merely representative of the time. Guiraud's brought back to the Parisian theater after an absence of four or five years the illustrious Mademoiselle Georges. Georges was thirty-eight years old at this time, supremely beautiful, and in possession of those glittering diamonds that made her appear like a star upon the stage. The shadow of Bonaparte still hovered about her and made her an object of awed curiosity to the populace. "How is it that Napoleon came to desert you?" the unthinking Dumas once asked her. "He left me to become an Emperor," she replied simply. This woman who had held the restless Corsican in her arms shared with Talma and Mademoiselle Mars the sovereignty of the French stage. There were other favorites, many of them, Mademoiselle Duchesnois, Lafond, Joanny, but at the apex was this trio left over from the days of the Empire. They were actors of the old school, noble and rounded in gestures and deliberate of voice, and their great personal charm and the success with which they maintained their followings may have played its slight part in damming the foaming flood of the Romantic reaction. They were not adapted to the new type of play and therefore they made a success of stilted dramas that would never have existed without their inspired presences. The personal triumphs were mistaken by the traditionalist playwrights as vindications of their hollow efforts. To realize what Dumas was about to bring to this dramatic scene one must understand the perplexing situation that existed at the time.

First there was the old tradition, dying hard but nevertheless dying, although its practitioners strove fiercely to maintain it. It was the tradition of Racine and Corneille emptied of the austere genius of those illustrious Frenchmen, a tradition of "tragedies" in the "grand style," wherein Gallic actors clad in plumed helmets and striped togas strutted heavily across the creaking boards and delivered interminable exhortations. The unities were rigidly observed, one scene, one time, one action. No gesture of violence or physical energy was permitted. Now and then corpulent mimes weighed down with rattling tin armor would solemnly slap huge swords together alternately or a barbarous king, bellowing through a tin pot with eye-slits, would slide painfully to the floor and die to a hundred or more alexandrines. The women stalked about like ostriches, their billowing robes flowing behind like unbelievable tail feathers. In the comedy roles of Molière they persevered in a stately coquetry. Racine and Corneille were inspired dramatists animated by a cold passion and a philosophical profundity, but between their masterpieces and the stiff productions of the Théâtre-Français as Dumas first knew it, there was nothing in common but the form. The tyrannous censorships of the Empire and the Restoration, suspicious always of innovation, embalmed this form and maintained it against a possible genre whose swifter actions might conceal political allusions. The playgoers of the day, therefore, were compelled to content themselves with Pierre Lebrun's *Le Cid d'Andalousie,* M. de Jouy's *Bélisaire,* M. Camberousse's *Judith* and the productions of the Arnault family. It was always safer to place the deliberate action in a foreign (and preferably classic) land. Guarding this school of turgid playwriting were the grumbling watch-dogs of the Academy, pedants like M. Lemercier who cried out in horror at the sacrileges of the romantic movement, signed voluminous petitions against the dramas of Hugo and Dumas, and barred the entrance of Lamartine to the Academy by nominating the Archbishop of Paris in his place.

It is curious that this war-like generation, embroiled in the campaigns of Napoleon, should have suffered such a lifeless school of drama. One reason would seem to be that the cup of actual living was so brimming for them, that their days passed through such a fervent splendor of existence, that the many passions coiled about

them so fiercely and so fierily that they were content to observe a vague, stilted, artificial adumbration of the human comedy. The literary sterility of the Empire may be explained through the richness of its daily living. The masterpieces of France then were actions. But when, after this brilliant régime, came the quietude and dullness of the Bourbons the young men felt the necessity of relief through vicarious promulgations of sensations. France rested from great wars and as her weariness left her and the youths of the Empire became the men of the Restoration, a desire for artificial emotions, to take the place of the vanished real passions, sprang into being. In this way the romantic movement became the reactionary influence of the Empire on the dull reigns that succeeded it. It was simple enough for the exhausted heroes of Marengo to sit through one of Luce de Lancival's dreary plays; it was, indeed, a rest, the reverse of their lives; but it was not so easy for the young men of the eighteen-twenties to sit through Lucien Arnault's *Régulus*. The abysmal vacuity of the Bourbon dynasty could be lightened only by a moving and sensational theater.

The young men, then, became restless. Trained though they had been to relish the turgidities of Arnault and Lemercier and Jouy they found this boresome style as intolerable as their tedious lives. They drank from the fountain of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Chateaubriand brought them the romance of England and Madame de Staël introduced them to German letters. They became fiery with new aspirations, animated by ardours undreamt by their fathers, and they desired violently to see depicted on the stage those nostalgias for freedom that stirred within them. They wanted movement, physical contact, combats, adventure, passions, slices from their own history, characters with whom they could identify themselves, the exotic color of the newly discovered Orient. They yearned for the downfall of the endless exhortation, and in its place the easy natural flow of living language. The raw conflicts in the cheap boulevard melodramas appealed to them more than did the dry austerities of the Théâtre-Français. What could age do against young men like these? It must give way sooner or later and the traditionalists found themselves retreating until they were safe only in the declamatory Bastille of the national theater. When this fell it meant that the old régime

fell with it. The purpose of the young men, then, was to capture the Théâtre-Français, and the happy arrival of Baron Taylor gave them the necessary breach in the wall. Dumas appeared upon this scene, a veritable Ange Pitou, unaware that he was to assist at the taking of the Bastille.

Baron Taylor had been appointed royal commissioner of the Théâtre-Français in 1825 and Baron Taylor possessed modern ideas. It was through him that the doors of the national theater were thrown open to Dumas, to Hugo and to de Vigny. He was cautious and tentative, but he was a distinct weakening in that stony bulwark the traditionalists had so well reared against romanticism. Then, too, there had been the Salon of 1824, another ominous inroad upon the classical austerities. This exhibition had aroused a sensation by the inclusion of many canvases by young and romantic painters. These pictures opened still wider the eyes of the intelligent minority already quivering with the new impulse and preparing its assault on the Théâtre-Français through the breach made by Baron Taylor. Ary Scheffer with his *Mort de Gaston de Foix,* Delacroix with his *Massacre de Scio,* Sigalon with his *Locuste faisant sur un esclave l'essai de ses poisons,* Coigniet with his *Le Massacre des Innocents,* the canvases of Schnetz and Boulanger, all this riot of color and action hinted at a pulsing life beyond the dreary formalisms of the Empire. In his studio the dying Géricault heard the cry of the new era and answered it with his *La Méduse.*

In 1827 Victor Hugo rallied the somewhat uncertain romantics with his preface to *Cromwell.* This document was, in effect, a manifesto of revolution. It removed the restrictions which the critical school of Boileau had put upon art. It demanded a fusion of the sublime and grotesque,—in other words, the union of tragedy and comedy. It calmly destroyed the unities. It announced that all that we see in nature belongs to dramatic art. In no uncertain tone this twenty-five-year-old prophet declared:

> Let us then speak boldly. The time for it has come, and it would be strange if, in this age, liberty, like the light, should penetrate everywhere except to the one place where freedom is most natural—the domain of the thought. Let us take the hammer to theories and

poetic systems. Let us throw down the old plastering that conceals the façade of art. There are neither rules nor models; or, rather, there are no other rules than the general laws of nature, which soar above the whole field of art, and the special rules which result from conditions appropriate to the subject of each composition. The former are of the essence, eternal, and do not change; the latter are variable, external, and are used but once. The former are the framework that supports the house; the latter the scaffolding which is used in building it, and which is made anew for each building. In a word, the former are the flesh and bones, the latter the clothing of the drama. But these rules are not written in the treatises on poetry. Richelet has no idea of their existence. Genius, which divines rather than learns, devises for each work the general rules from the general plan of things, the special rules from the separate *ensemble* of the subject treated; not after the manner of the chemist, who lights the fire under his furnace, heats his crucible, analyses and destroys; but after the manner of the bee, which flies on its golden wings, lights on each flower and extracts its honey, leaving it as brilliant and fragrant as before.

And again:

The drama has but to take a step to break all the spider's webs with which the militia of Lilliput have attempted to fetter its sleep.

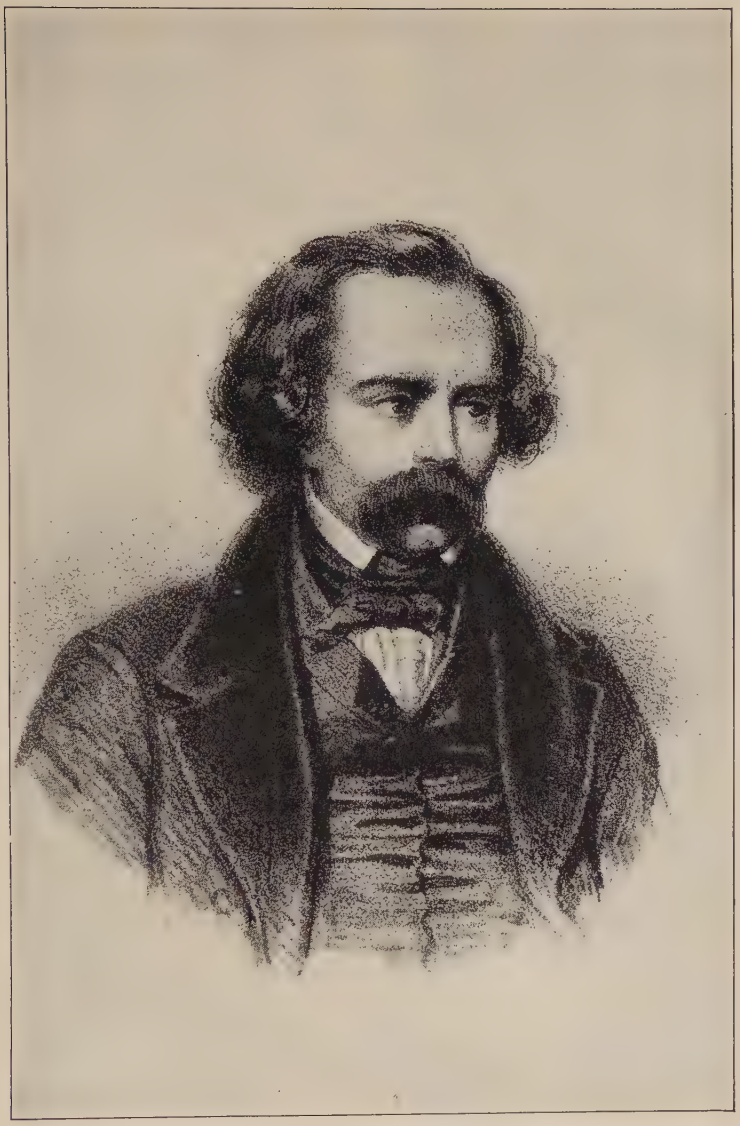
This preface came like a *"coup de tonnerre formidable dans le ciel classique"* and Hugo immediately and tacitly was regarded as the generalissimo of the romantic forces. The insurgents possessed a constitution at last.

Another unexpected and unsuspected phenomenon which quickened the romantic movement was the influence of English literature trickling across the twenty-two troubled miles of the English Channel. The easy movement and lyric poetry of Shakespeare (although it is doubtful that the French mind has ever really appreciated him), the melodramatic technique of Nicholas Rowe, the writings of Walter Scott, the poetry and astonishing life of Lord Byron, all this foreign influx encouraged and quickened the impulses of novelists, poets and playwrights. In 1827 a company of English players came to Paris, a

troupe including Abbott, Charles Kemble, Harriet Smithson and Liston. They acted *Hamlet, Romeo and Juliet, Othello* and several of the more popular English plays, *The Rivals, She Stoops to Conquer, Love, Law and Physic.* It was a revelation to the younger Frenchmen who crowded the theater and expatiated on these representations so filled with freedom and animation and spirit. Dumas who saw these actors again and again and whose opinion is representative of the young men of his era, exclaimed: "It is the first time that I have seen on the stage real passions warming men and women made of flesh and blood." Here was a spectacle of actors forgetting that they were on the stage. They did not turn to the footlights and solemnly tramp down to the lighted brink and declaim an oration for twenty minutes. They held each other in their arms; they kissed one another; they fought with swords; they fell with lamentable cries; they died as quickly as death will come. This season of 1827 was the turning point of Dumas's career; the vaudevilles *à la Scribe* were put behind him; it was time to place life upon the stage. It was the turning point in the careers of many other young men as well. The romantic movement had become explicit and they knew what they were about. It was time for the ultimate assault upon the frowning Bastille of the Théâtre-Français.

## II

Dumas went to Soulié. Soulié had removed from his chambers in the rue de Provence and now lived near La Gare where he conducted a saw-mill in which more than a hundred workmen were employed. In other words, he mixed saw-dust with his inspiration. He was as obstinate as ever, although fortune had not provided him with a premiére as yet. Soulié listened to Dumas, smiled at the flow of enthusiastic prospects and agreed to write a play with him. Why not? Dumas was young and could do the hard work. Neither of the budding playwrights felt equal to an original plot so they decided to extract one from Walter Scott. It was the fashion. *Le Château de Kenilworth* (not the unfortunate play fostered by Soulié and de Leuven) was running at the Porte-Saint-Martin and a *Quentin Durward* was about to be produced at the Théâtre-Français. Scott, then,



FREDERIC SOULIÉ

*This writer was the first real literary friend that Dumas knew*

LES FRERES PROVENCEAUX

*Dumas dined many times in this famous restaurant*

was a treasure chest of material and whoso desired might thrust in his hand and draw forth a drama. Dumas and Soulié plunged eager hands into this Scott chest; they emerged with *Old Mortality*. Soulié was fascinated with the characters of John Balfour, of Burley and Bothwell. They would write a drama entitled *Puritains d'Écosse*, employing the same title as that of Bellini's opera produced at the Théâtre-Italien in 1835. But Soulié was Soulié still, hard-headed, stubborn and dominating; and Dumas was Dumas, unyielding and certain of what he desired to do. There was a surplus of individuality in the two men. They struggled at the collaboration, knocked their heads together, quarreled, argued, tore up each other's manuscript and at the end of three months had proceeded no further than they had at their first meeting. Dumas could collaborate—indeed, about forty of his plays were to be put together in this way—but it was necessary that he be the dominating factor. Soulié would not permit this; he, himself, was too dominating a figure. The result of *Puritains d'Écosse* was a deadlock. The two men scowled at each other, smiled, shook hands and the collaboration was at an end. His attempt to work with a strong individuality was of inestimable profit to Dumas, however, for during it he had widened his range of vision. New forces began to spring up in him because of his struggle with this rough champion.

About this time Dumas happened upon Schiller's *Die Verschwörung des Fiesko zu Genua* and the breath of revolt animating this tragedy of a state as well as an individual transported the young man. Here were violent passions and situations calculated to seduce a budding romantic spirit. The enigmatical and noble figure of Fiesco di Lavagna stood out above all, and Dumas, charmed by the tragedy of Fiesco's conspiracy against the great house of Doria in Genoa, set to work at a translation of the play in French dramatic verse, submerging himself for long hours in the character of Fiesco, the noble republican, Verrina, and the Moor. He shifted and changed as he proceeded with his labors, revised scenes, cut out extraneous passages, heightened the climaxes. It was a laboratory exercise for the young man, filling long evenings with heart-breaking work. It was also a labor of love, for there was no hope of its production anywhere, and Dumas's prime purpose in translating this German *Sturm und Drang* tragedy was

to receive practice in dialogue in verse. The time spent in working at this play was in the long run not lost at all; it added immeasurably to his comprehension of dramatic structure; and it even suggested episodes in several of his earlier plays.

Dumas pushed through the crowd at the Salon of 1827, a shifting mass of people sprinkled with long-haired young men extolling the beauties of the English players, and paused before two small bas-reliefs by Mademoiselle de Fauveau. One of them represented a scene from *The Abbot.* He had read *The Abbot* and identified at once the situation which the delicate fingers of the young sculptress had moulded. The second bas-relief depicted the assassination of Monaldeschi. This was a mystery to the young man. He had never heard of Monaldeschi. No one had ever told him about Christine of Sweden. Something in the agonized figure of Monaldeschi appealed to him, and that evening at La Gare, while Soulié was discussing his *Roméo et Juliette,* the simulation in plaster of a wracked body leaped into his mind. Soulié was gloomy. The advent of the English players had made it evident to him that he would have to rewrite his paraphrase of Shakespeare's play. Monaldeschi was the name. Christine. Dumas did not dare ask Soulié about these historical characters, for the manager of the saw-mill would burst into laughter as raucous and cutting as his saws at such a revelation of ignorance. Instead, he asked for the *Biographie universelle.* Soulié indicated the bulky volumes. Dumas read the articles on Monaldeschi and Christine. For a long time he sat gazing at nothing in particular while a jumble of frantic incidents turned over and over in his mind. "There is a terrible drama in all that," he said presently. "In what?" inquired Soulié, lifting his eyes from his own copy. "In the assassination of Monaldeschi by Christine." A queer, amazed look came into Soulié's face and he rose abruptly to his feet. "I should think so," he answered shortly. "Shall we do it together?" asked Dumas. Soulié refused with such rude emphasis that the young man stared at him helplessly. "The fact is," said Soulié grudgingly, "I intend to use that subject for a tragedy myself." Dumas laid down the volume silently. Very well, then. Suddenly Soulié laughed. He gazed closely at the tall form sitting before him and laughed again. "Go ahead," he said. "Write your own drama on the

subject. I don't care." The idea of caring! Competition with a young ignoramus from Villers-Cotterets! "There are more theaters than one in Paris," he added, "and there are a dozen ways of treating a subject." He would be generous. Not that he feared any rivalry. *La Chasse et l'Amour! La Noce et l'Enterrement!* The young man was saying something. "But which of us will read it at the Théâtre-Français?" Soulié controlled a smile as he answered: "Whichever shall finish first." "Would it not annoy you?" The earnest blue eyes were studying him. Soulié lost his temper. "What the devil do you think it would do to *me?*" he growled. The impertinence of the puppy! How many times had he lost his temper during the ill-starred collaboration? "You are not very amiable tonight," returned the puppy. Soulié scowled for a second and then smiled. After all Dumas was a gentle puppy. "I am not in a good temper," he replied. "The English players have upset me. I shall have to rewrite my *Juliette.*" "I wish you would take my advice," remarked Dumas, rising to his feet. Soulié grunted. The young man proceeded: "Leave your *Juliette* at one side as I have done my *Fiesque* and work at something of your own." Soulié said "Bah!"

Dumas wandered along the deserted boulevard. It was dark and a chill rain was falling. Monaldeschi. Christine. Dim scenes floated through the air. He reached the Porte-Saint-Denis and was about to leave the boulevard to re-enter the street when he heard loud cries ahead of him. Hurrying forward he saw in the midst of the rainy darkness four people struggling violently. Two men, evidently footpads, were attacking a man and woman and the assaulted man was defending himself as best he could with a slender cane. Dumas, with the gusto of a d'Artagnan, rushed to the rescue. He leaped on the back of the thug attempting to snatch a chain from the woman's neck. The other footpad, observing this unexpected arrival, vanished in the darkness. Dumas continued to sit on his captured thief and squeeze his throat until that unfortunate individual, considering capture better than strangulation, lifted a red face from the wet ground and bawled for help. Several soldiers came running from the nearby military station of Bonne-Nouvelle and pulled Dumas from his victim. The young man turned and looked into the frightened face of Adèle Dalvin.

Soldiers like policemen are not over-blessed with brains, and as it was too dark for them to distinguish the robber from the robbed or the saviour from the saved, they marched the quartet to the guard-room. Dumas found himself walking beside Adèle Dalvin. He had not seen her since that day in the woods when she had returned from Haramont bearing orange blossoms and with her bridal veil streaming behind her in the soft breeze. The trees then had been filled with a fainting scent. Twilight had crept up about the gnarled trunks. It was so long ago. She hardly dared look at him. Dumas said:

"What were you doing out so late?"

There had been a special performance at the Porte-Saint-Martin theater and she and her husband had been to that. She had enjoyed the play. It was *La Noce et l'Enterrement.* She looked up at him smiling. Really, she had not changed much. A trifle plumper, perhaps. Her hair was the same. And her eyes.

"After that?"

"Oh, we had supper in the théâtre-café. . . . You know how greedy I am. Then we went to Charlard's chemist's shop. Then . . ."

They turned into the guardhouse and were led to that part called the *violon.* Locks clicked behind them.

"In the morning . . . *Monsieur le chef du poste . . .*"

Footsteps died away. Darkness. Then a pale light that filtered through the barred window. The thief began to snore loudly. Dumas sat on the edge of the camp-bed and observed Adèle. She was falling fast asleep with her head on the shoulder of her husband. The young playwright changed his position softly so that he might view her more easily. She was the first memory in his life. How they had wept together, mingling their tears in that little room to which he used to make his way by running across meadows and leaping high walls! The scent of the countryside had been all about them and the great wheel of heaven, glittering with a million lights, had revolved above their young heads. Her hair had flowed across his face. She was asleep now. She was happy. Someone—was it a letter to his mother from Madame Darcourt?—had said that she possessed two children. Consolation for lost love. Lost? No love was ever lost. There were partings only. Had he not recently quarreled with Marie-Catherine? The best part of love was memory perhaps. Dumas closed his eyes.

He had written a poem in the dark wood that night after the bridal procession had passed. How did it go?

*Qu'un autre chante tes appas*
*Ou que tu restes inconnue . . .*
*Peu m'importe . . . en vain la charrue*
*Déchire les terrains ingrats.*

*Mais un jour autour de tes charmes*
*La mort roulera son linceuil*
*Et de la tombe insensible à tes larmes*
*Tes pieds glacés dépasseront le seuil.*

*Dédaignant ta cendre endormie,*
*Alors le voyageur par sa course emporté*
*Passera près de toi sans dire à son amie:*
*"Ici repose une jeune beauté."*

It was a poor poem. He had deliberately mispronounced "shroud" to make a rhyme. *"Linceuil"* should have been *"linceul."* Well, he had been young. Adèle. . . . He settled himself against the cold stone wall and composed himself for sleep. It was as easy as that. Not a scar left. He had wept about something a long time ago . . . a long time . . . ago. Monaldeschi. Christine. Love and political ambition. The harshness of Christine and the cowardice of Monaldeschi. "There is a terrible drama in all that." The opening scenes of a play in verse stole into the consciousness of the sleepy young man. Odd couplets wound and unwound themselves like thin snakes of light in the dimness of the *violon.* His head bowed lower on his breast; his breathing became even and light and slower; in a moment there were four slumbering people in the small chamber.

M. Oudard was one of those fair-minded humorless men who make perfect directors in offices of business. Nothing existed outside of his position and anything that interfered with the smooth routine of his department was a threatening obstacle to be disposed of as rapidly as possible. He did not approve of extraneous interests. They compli-

cated matters and injected a spirit of diffusion in an atmosphere that, to his mind, should be devoid of anything but the steady scribbling of quill pens and the rustle of many sheets of paper. Dumas had developed into a disquieting influence. Lassagne was writing plays with him. Ernest was listening with mouth agape to sensational tales of life in the pasteboard world of the theater. Dumas was arriving late at his desk. He was leaving early. He was still determined to do "different" things from *L'École des Vieillards.* He continued to sneer at the name of Casimir Delavigne. He was constantly interrupting his copying activities to mutter aesthetic jargon to Lassagne about Christine of Sweden, whoever she was. M. Oudard was disturbed. The mellow atmosphere of his office began to smack too much of the green room. It was time to eradicate young Dumas. At the same time he did not want to remove him from the payrolls of the Duc d'Orléans. After all, there was Madame Dumas to consider. And some one had told M. Oudard that the reckless young man had contracted an illegal union with a plump little milliner and that she had borne him a son. M. Oudard went into conference with M. de Broval. "Hmm. Transfer him to the Record Office." Such a transference from the secretarial department, which was large and offered various opportunities for promotion, to the Record Office, which was a small *cul-de-sac,* was tantamount to disgrace. Dumas, apprized of the change by a much-concerned Lassagne, whistled to keep up his courage, removed his cloak from the hook, shook hands with Lassagne and Ernest, bowed gravely to M. Oudard who as gravely returned the bow, and departed in search of the Record Office. M. Oudard sighed with relief. There was no sound in the small office but the steady scratching of pens.

In the Record Office a tiny old man of eighty years looked up from a dusty bundle of papers with a baby-like scowl on his countenance. Dumas, who had clattered in noisily, stared at his future director with amazement. M. Bichet was dressed in satin breeches, variegated stockings, a black cloth coat and a gilet of flowered silk. This costume was touched off by various ruffles and frills. As he lifted his little face, which was surrounded by a halo of fluffy white hair, he revealed a tiny queue thrusting cockily out over his collar. M. Bichet had dressed this way since 1788. The Revolution, the Empire and the Restoration

had not existed for him. He belonged to the period when Marie-Antoinette played milk-maid. Forgotten in his Record Office by time, he in turn had forgotten that Time existed. They were mutual strangers. He resented the acquisition of the tall young man who stood before him waiting for instructions. He might as well have a . . . have a dromedary in the office. His acquisition was offensively young. He probably whistled, knocked over books, wrote an atrocious hand and was generally worthless. To show his annoyance M. Bichet loaded Dumas's table with the accumulated arrears of work which had piled up since the last clerk, a noble fellow of seventy-eight, had gone to join Marie-Antoinette in Heaven. Then M. Bichet, smoothing his frills with a tiny white hand, ambled back to his eternal day-dream in his private nook. He hoped that that offensive fellow would not poke his nose in there for a month.

Within three days Dumas completed a month's work and carried it in and laid it on M. Bichet's desk. M. Bichet came out of his trance with a sigh. If Louis XVI . . . no, no . . . Louis XVI was dead . . . if the Duc d'Orléans thought that he was going to stand this constant running in and out of the office . . . He drew the pile of copy toward him testily. How the offensive fellow must have scamped it! Times have changed. Everything was rush now. In the good old days . . . "Eh! Eh!" ejaculated M. Bichet, his tiny eyes opening wide in his tiny face and his tiny mouth opening wider as he observed the copy. It was beautifully written; the margins were excellent; nothing was omitted. That handwriting. Why, surely! M. Bichet looked up with a beaming smile. "Your handwriting is the same style as Piron's, Monsieur," he announced and leaning back waited complacently for the young man to fall to the floor stunned by this compliment. "The deuce!" replied the young man. Now who in the devil was Piron? Slowly he realized. Piron was a minor poet of the old school who had once been employed in the Palais-Royal. "You have another point in common with him, I hear," went on M. Bichet slyly. "What is that, Monsieur?" "You write poetry." Dumas lowered his eyes and said, "Alas!" Was he in for another warning about wasting his time? M. Bichet was gazing at the finished reports. "Hum . . . good . . . in fact, excellent. . . . Piron. . . . He was a gay young dog. . . . A hand with the ladies . . ." M. Bichet

choked and chuckled. His little queue wagged roguishly. "Your poetry is not in the same style as Piron's?" Dumas admitted modestly that it was not. Good God, he should hope not! And now for more work. M. Bichet, still chuckling, explained that there was no more work. Until it arrived the young man could work at his tragedy. Of course, he had started a tragedy? Dumas was about to say drama but saved himself just in time. M. Bichet waved him away. "Just like Piron's," he repeated in a tiny ecstasy. "I must tell my friends, Pieyre, the writer of comedies, and Parseval de Grandmaison, the epic poet. They will be delighted." Dumas heard the miniature chuckle as he closed the door behind him and walked slowly to his desk. He drew a bulky bundle of notes from his cloak and spread them before him. Truly, *Christine* was growing. Here was the speech he had recited to that fellow, Méry, whom he had met a day or so before in the Luxembourg Gardens. Méry was a writer and Méry had approved. Dumas picked up his pen and the office, like M. Oudard's secretarial department, was silent save for the scratching of quill on paper.

He did not know how long he wrote. The peace and quiet of this forgotten little corner wherein M. de Broval never stepped, across which no officious office boys from the Duc d'Orléans' private bureau ran with messages, where the ponderous step of that righteous watch dog, M. Oudard, never sounded, were like a miniature heaven. He was not lonely because he had his manuscript with him. Page after page of it covered with his fine even handwriting, carefully blotted with sand, lay strewn over the desk. Give him a month of this unbroken silence and *Christine* would be finished. He reached for a new sheet of paper and as he did so he experienced the uneasy sensation of being watched. He lifted his head and looked up into six curious eyes, observing him in much the same manner that a small boy gapes at his first giraffe. There was a very small pair of eyes in a very small face. That was M. Bichet. There was a very round pair of eyes in a very round face. That was M. Pieyre. There was a very long pair of eyes in a very long face. That was M. Parseval de Grandmaison. Dumas knew them instinctively. They stood like Minos, Aeacus and Rhadamanthus. M. Bichet broke the silence first.

"There he is!" burst forth his high thin voice. "Upon my word, his handwriting is just like Piron's."

"Piron's," said M. Pieyre.

"What's-his-name's," added M. Parseval de Grandmaison.

Dumas rose to his feet and bowed awkwardly. The tiny man, the round man and the long man returned his bow with old-fashioned aristocratic flourishes of the court of Louis XVI.

"What did you tell me Monsieur did?" inquired M. Pieyre, turning to M. Bichet.

"He writes poetry," returned M. Bichet proudly.

"Poetry!" exclaimed M. Pieyre.

"What-d'ye-call-it," agreed M. Parseval de Grandmaison.

The long old man turned to the other two.

"Do you know," he said, "a curious thing happened to me the other day. I forgot my own name!"

"Not your own name!" cried M. Bichet.

"Yes, monsieur. It was at the marriage contract of . . . what's-his-name . . . who married the daughter of . . . so-and-so . . . he wrote a work on something-or-other . . . that was burned . . . Vesuvius . . . where somebody-or-other died . . ."

"Marois," ventured Dumas, "who wrote a book on Pompeii, where Pliny died."

"That's it!" agreed M. Parseval de Grandmaison, smiling at the young man.

Dumas observed the three old gentlemen with amazement. It was unbelievable. They might have stepped out of a comedy. He might have invented them himself. Perhaps he had, and he gazed wildly at the sheet of paper upon which he had been writing. They were so old-fashioned, so gentle, so forgetful, so easily stirred to mild tremors at the thought of poetry. He listened to M. Parseval de Grandmaison's ambling tale of how he forgot his name. He explained rather guardedly the subject-matter of *Christine*. It would never do to flutter these old gentlemen with new aesthetic theories. He even recited for them a poem of his own called *La Peyrouse*. Minos, Aeacus and Rhadamanthus were pleased. They twiddled their thumbs, smiled, nodded to one another and murmured, "Just like Piron! Just like Piron!" Dumas felt like Ovid exiled among the Thracians when he heard the applause given his *Tristia*.

For two months he remained in the Record Office and for the

greater part of those two months he occupied his time laboring over *Christine,* rewriting, polishing, readjusting. So much leisure during the day gave him an unaccustomed freedom during the evening, for now he did not have to confine his composition to his chamber. He went out into the streets, wandered about with friends to the cafés or called upon old acquaintances of his father or sat enthralled watching the English players or continued his readings in Shakespeare, Molière, Corneille, Calderon, Goethe and Schiller. It was a brief period of uninterrupted fruitfulness for him and he relished it; but even as he relished it he suspected that it would not last. The blow fell one morning when he received notice that his position was regarded by the thrifty Duc as a sinecure and that he should report the next day to the Forestry Department. The Forestry Department! M. Deviolaine's department! What was that about trashy plays? He was lost.

The Forestry Department was the reverse of the Record Office. It was filled with noise and bustle and more work than the perspiring clerks could handle. To Dumas it seemed that he had entered a foundry at its busiest moment from the contemplative calm of a chapel. He was sulky and depressed, for this change had brought his unfinished *Christine* to an abrupt halt. Regardless of consequences he determined to fashion a quiet nook for himself in the midst of this hubbub. If he could not write verses, at least he could meditate in peace. He had been five years in the Palais-Royal and he had accomplished nothing but two beggarly vaudevilles in collaboration with four other writers. It was a poor showing. *Christine* was his opportunity and he must make the most of it. Dumas calmly installed himself in the office-boy's cubicle where that young Caligula kept his ink bottles. The office-boy bellowed with rage. The clerks made pointed remarks about young Dumas's overweening sense of superiority. Dumas stuck doggedly to his tiny den. The office-boy complained to the clerks; the clerks went to the chief clerk; that individual went to the head of the department; the head of the department made some comment on presumptuousness and handed the chief clerk an order removing the sulking Achilles from his stolen tent. Luckily for Dumas M. Deviolaine was away at the time. The office-boy communicated the removal notice with a jeer, and Dumas, regarding himself

as badgered and humiliated beyond belief, retaliated by delivering such a cuff against the office-boy's head that he knocked that young gentleman's hat out the window and half-way across the great court of the Palais-Royal. This was probably the first blow for freedom that had ever been struck in the Duc d'Orléans establishment. Then, cramming his hat on his somewhat frizzy curls, the irate poet rushed home.

Madame Dumas burst into tears at the sight of her son arriving flushed and excited at such an unexpected hour of the day. She recalled only too clearly his return from M. Lefèvre's law office in 1823. Putting on her black jacket she hurried away to the Deviolaine home with the flurried intention of making whatever amends she could for her son. When the door closed behind her Dumas sat down in the empty room and endeavored to arrange his riotous thoughts. It was quiet there and perhaps he might write a little. There was that fifth act to finish. He walked over to the table and was about to open the drawer that contained his manuscript when Marie-Catherine entered with her small boy. She listened to Dumas's aggrieved tale, and instead of commiserating with him as he expected began to chastise him verbally. Marie-Catherine, when she pleased, had a lively tongue. It pleased her often enough now and the young couple had quarreled so much that they had just separated, Marie-Catherine remaining in the Place des Italiens and Dumas residing regularly with his mother in the rue de l'Ouest. Their last quarrel had been fearful. Who had been to blame? It is easy to settle that problem by pointing out that Dumas was never a family man, that he possessed no proper idea of fidelity or obligations, that he was naturally polygamous in tendency and that the girls of the boulevards were coquettishly complaisant to the tall young man. Dumas listened in silence to Marie-Catherine's excoriations, but when Alexandre *fils,* clutching his mother's skirt, set up a loud wail the infuriated young poet placed his head in his hands and rocked from side to side. At that moment he would have enjoyed strangling the future author of *La Dame aux Camélias.* It was all too impossible. Gabbling clerks and stupid officials at the Palais-Royal. A wailing child and a quick-tongued mother. Where was he to go and what was he to do? How in the name of the Forty Immortals was he ever to finish *Christine?* When he was again alone—Marie-

Catherine having exhausted herself and departed dragging the child behind her—Dumas scribbled a note of explanation and apology to M. Deviolaine and despatched it to the Palais-Royal, where, it was to be presumed, it would be handed over to the growling official upon his return. Then he called on Porcher. Porcher had been his friend in the past and there was no reason why he should not be so in the future. But Porcher shied at the suggestion of advancing any money on an unplaced tragedy. He controlled a smile at the picture of Dumas invading the frowning precincts of the Théâtre-Français. "Confound it," he said, "if it had been a vaudeville now . . . something worked up with Rousseau . . . but a tragedy!" He shook his head. "Get it received," he added, "and we shall see." Get it received! What Dumas desired was to get it finished. That evening he walked with a heavy heart down the rue de l'Ouest. It did not occur to him that he was at fault, that, after all, he was no more than an ordinary clerk in a large establishment where only head clerks were rewarded with private offices, that his brief sojourn in the calm oasis of M. Bichet's bureau had spoiled him, that like all creators he fondly imagined the wheels of business should pause and accommodate his uncertain desires. All that he perceived was a thwarted young writer who possessed an excellent idea and could not get on with it and live at the same time. It was the eternal injustice that a practical world metes out to the artist who would both live by it and scorn it.

Dumas walked about for a long time, avoiding de Leuven, Soulié and his new friend Méry. He wanted to put his jumbled thoughts in order. Then he returned to his home and went to bed and stayed there for three days and nights. On the morning of the fourth day he put the finishing touches to the first draft of *Christine,* added the famous last line:

*Eh bien, j'en ai pitié, mon père . . . Qu'on l'achève!*

which, by the way, was not to be the last line in the final acting version, and opened with a trembling hand a letter which his mother handed him and which bore the frank of the Palais-Royal.

M. Deviolaine thrust a ferocious face toward Dumas and scowled. He was more like a boar than ever.

"You cursed blockhead!" he shouted. "So we are too grand a lord to work with ordinary mortals!"

"That is not so," replied Dumas. "I am not a sufficiently grand lord to work with the others, that is why I wish to work alone."

M. Deviolaine laughed hoarsely and snapped his thick fingers.

"You desire a private office in which to do nothing but write your dirty plays?"

Dumas flushed but his voice was steady. He replied:

"I ask for an office for myself so that I can have the right to think while I am working."

"To think!" screamed Deviolaine. "You are not paid to think!"

He strode up and down snorting and grumbling to himself, his bulky chest thrust out, his brawny arms waving.

"If it were not for your mother," he mumbled, "I'd send you packing, you rascal! A private office . . . for my lord Dumas . . . very well . . . very well . . . you may have your private office."

Dumas opened his eyes in glad amazement. He started to stutter something but M. Deviolaine broke in.

"You shall have your full share of work. I shall oversee it personally. If you scamp anything, you puppy, off you go! Now return to your . . . your private office, try to make up for the three days you have lost and don't talk too much to the ink-bottles."

Dumas re-entered the Forestry Department with a bland smile at the disconcerted clerks. He sat down in the cubicle which the office-boy, instinctively rubbing his ear, hastily vacated, and sharpened his pen and set to work.

## III

M. Villenave was a fine looking old gentleman with white hair curling daintily about his temples. His black eyes flashed with a Southern fire and when he conversed his gestures were graceful and distinguished. He had been in Nantes during the Terror when Jean-Baptiste Carrier, of bloody memory, had flung his *mariages révolutionnaires* into the Loire, and he had written a pamphlet on these atrocities called *Relation des noyades de cent trente-deux Nantais.* Madame Villenave was a gracious little old lady who concealed the fact that

she suffered from cancer. She entertained superbly and to observe her move about a room was a distinct pleasure. Théodore Villenave was a tall, energetic young man who wrote poetry. But it was not M. Villenave, who was a bibliophile and whose gigantic library threatened to weigh down the house at eighty-two, rue de Vaugirard, nor Madame Villenave, who passed the tea and cakes so prettily, nor Théodore Villenave, who had introduced him to this house of books, that Dumas's eyes followed. Seated near a bronze urn which had once contained the heart of Bayard and beneath a portrait of Anne Boleyn by Holbein was a rather thin, repressed-appearing young woman with black hair and an extremely dark complexion who held a charming small child against her slender knee. This young woman spoke very seldom and when she did she spoke in a low husky voice. An indefinable atmosphere of melancholia hovered about her. She was Madame Mélanie Waldor, daughter of M. Villenave and wife of an infantry captain who was posted in garrison outside of Paris. The eyes of Dumas seemed chained to this woman. She was dark and Marie-Catherine was blonde. She was silent and Marie-Catherine was talkative. She was aristocratic and Marie-Catherine was distinctly of the people. She wrote poetry and Marie-Catherine could not even read with pleasure. Dumas observed this young woman who had come so unexpectedly into his life and his voice became husky, hesitant and uncontrollable. He was fascinated, stunned, paralyzed by an instantaneous infatuation. The women he had known before, Adèle, Marie-Catherine, Mademoiselle Walker, the light loves of the evening boulevards, were completely erased from his mind before this aloof woman who sat so still beneath the Holbein canvas. She appeared unattainable and Dumas instantly desired her.

M. Villenave continued his conversation. He told the bloody story of Jean-Baptiste Carrier and Dumas mumbled absent-minded responses. He showed the young man his stacks of boxes containing autographs, and the creator of *Christine* without knowing what he was saying, promised the old collector an autograph of Buonaparte containing the rare "u." Théodore Villenave recited some of his verses and Dumas applauded without having heard them. Madame Villenave passed him a cup of tea and he placed it beside him and did not pick it up again. Mélanie Waldor sat beside the urn that had

contained the noble heart of Bayard and said nothing but her dark eyes lifted once and gazed steadily at the young man who was watching. She coughed slightly and turned away. Miles away Captain Waldor sat at the mess-table with his brother officers and discussed the Spanish Campaign. Marie-Catherine, at number one, Place des Italiens, was undressing Alexandre *fils* and settling him in his little bed. It was June, 1827. By September the dark-eyed Mélanie had given herself to Dumas.

The four months that intervened between these dates were months of fury and passion for the young dramatist. This woman, six years older than he (she was born in 1796), aroused a Macchiavelli, a Mephistopheles and a Don Juan in Dumas. Mélanie was cold at first and indignantly repudiated the frank advances of Dumas. He became more wily. He wrote to her every day, sometimes twice a day. He sought excuses to call at the Villenave house. Mélanie, frightened at the outset by this romantic passion and yet lured by it, observed Dumas with a troubled eye. She was a poet and a blue stocking who possessed no particular affection for her garrison-minded husband, and the spectacle of this tall young man in his Quiroga cape, with his colored gilets and his decorated cane and his Byronic mannerisms disturbed that sang-froid which had been her armour in the Villenave household. She, too, dramatized herself. She preserved a resistance at first, but it was a short resistance. The appeal of the passionate young man was too much. She was lonely and he was the exhilarated child of his romantic era. She was literarily inclined and he was a poet and dramatist. He read long scenes from *Christine* to her and his burning marginal comments which accompanied the readings steadily weakened her attitude. He excited and thrilled her by Satanic posings, questionings of the existence of God, half-formulated threats of the Mephistophelian life he intended to follow; for that, too, like an aped consumption, was a part of the romantic mummery of the times. She suggested a Platonic relationship. Dumas laughed at the thought, and stalked up and down the Villenave drawing-room. The situation developed into a siege during which Dumas neglected his work, his mother, everything. As for Marie-Catherine, the mother of his illegitimate son, she had been swept completely out of his mind. She knew this and was prepared already for those long years of

estrangement. Dumas made irregular attempts to provide a little for Marie-Catherine, but the passion which had been born and which had died in the three little rooms at number one, Place des Italiens, was finished. The volatile young man, a confirmed disciple of Venus, sought love in other and many places. At this moment it was Mélanie, and Mélanie became a flaming desire for him.

It is impossible to analyze this passion with any degree of exactitude. But it is possible to understand a part of it. Mélanie Waldor was the first "lady" who suggested the possibility of conquest to Dumas. The passionate negro in him was aroused and importunate to taste the joys of a liaison that possessed its intellectual ardours as well as the spontaneous madnesses of the flesh. Was she was at work on a romance, *L'Écuyer Daubernon?* Dumas was enchanted with distinguished names, with caste, with refinements all his life, and to the young man of 1827 Madame Mélanie Waldor, daughter of the well known bibliophile, M. Villenave, was a prize slightly above his station. He was inconsistent in this for he knew himself to be the son of General Alexandre Dumas. At the same time he must have realized also that he was the country boy from Villers-Cotterets who labored as a simple clerk in the Duc d'Orléans' establishment at the Palais-Royal.

The weeks passed with the wooing of Mélanie, a constant flood of amorous letters, melodramatic posings, and still the dark-eyed young woman remained adamant. Dumas decided upon a decisive step. Though he was almost penniless he engaged a small room, and from it wrote to Mélanie. His letters were sly, calculated to combat her scruples, but still she was chary. She probably knew in her heart that she could not withstand these advances much longer, that a kindred passion had been awakened in her slender body. She protested that if she came to that tiny hidden room alone she would not be safe, that Dumas would towzle her new flounced garments. It was a weak protest and Dumas, scenting victory, assured her that she need only remove her hat, that such a protest was cruelty, but that if she insisted he would do no more than gaze upon her beauty. He awaited her, knowing that her last qualms had been satisfied in her own mind. And she went to him knowing that the inevitable was about to occur. It was during the last part of September, 1827, that Mélanie

gave herself to Dumas and embarked upon that three years' liaison which was to be so full of unhappinesses, scruples and jealousies for her and wearinesses and infidelities for him. It was impossible for Dumas to remain faithful to any woman for any degree of time. Alexandre *fils,* who had been born on July 27, 1824, was three years and two months old at this time.

After his conquest Dumas became more dithyrambic on paper than ever. His self-dramatization continued to endless screeds written at all hours of the day and night, letters of reassurance, of love, of advice, of Satanic prophecies. These epistles would be interrupted by his clerical duties, by his revision of *Christine,* by hunger. Dumas always possessed an excellent appetite and he could interrupt a love letter with the utmost equanimity in order to go out and eat a fine rich meal. There was a little of the soul of Gargantua in him. Mélanie, for her part, strove to slacken the ardor of this volcanic young man. Weak and rather anaemic, her blood ran thin and physical passion did not rouse her to the same degree as it did Dumas. Her lassitude provoked Dumas, but for the time being his desire was unabated. Mélanie began to suffer from palpitation of the heart but Dumas remained the undaunted lover. She developed dyspepsia and this rather cooled his ardour. A dyspeptic mistress was not exactly the type one could poetize about. He advised her to fatten herself and threatened that as soon as she was plumper he would plague her to thinness again with love. Mélanie must have heard this with a wry smile.

As a matter of fact, she received nothing from this liaison but unhappiness; Dumas, on the contrary, found the substance of one of his most sensational plays in it.

*Christine* was finished. But what was Dumas to do with this bastard daughter born outside the gates of the Institute and the Academy. De Leuven could not help him; De Leuven's entrée to the Théâtre-Français was through that conservative of conservatives, M. Arnault. Rousseau had never aimed as high as the national theater. Soulié was at work himself on a *Christine.* It would therefore be futile to go to him. Lassagne possessed no acquaintances within the sacred precincts. Still Lassagne was an astute young man and it would do no harm to ask him. "Do you know Baron Taylor?" Dumas asked. Lassagne

shook his head. "Charles Nodier is his intimate friend," he replied. "Well, what of that?" "Did you not tell me a story once about sitting beside Nodier at some performance or other?" Dumas's eyes brightened. Of course! His first night as a citizen of Paris. *Le Vampire.* The gentleman with *Le Pastissier François.* He had worn a buff waistcoat and whistled at the performance and been ejected. Dumas sat down at Lassagne's desk and drew up a letter to Charles Nodier recalling to him the young man who had sat beside him at the performance of *Le Vampire,* the conversation on Elzevirs, rotifers, vampires and Nero, and begging him to introduce that young man to Baron Taylor, royal commissioner of the Théâtre-Français. That done and the letter despatched there was nothing to do but wait. Within a few days Dumas received a letter not from Charles Nodier but from Baron Taylor himself making an appointment for seven o'clock in the morning five or six days hence. When the fateful morning arrived a trembling Dumas, bearing a huge roll of manuscript beneath his arm, mounted the steps at 42, rue du Bondy, and pulled the bell-cord with a shaking hand.

Baron Taylor was sitting in his bath-tub, caught like an enraged tiger in his den, while a persistent gentleman sat on the edge of the tub and read to him an interminable tragedy called *Hécube.* At every outrageous alexandrine Baron Taylor would knock his head against the side of the bath and groan. When the author of *Hécube* perceived the timid Dumas entering with a great roll of paper under his arm he clutched the tub more tightly and interrupted his reading long enough to say: "There are only two more acts, Monsieur,—there are only two more acts!" Baron Taylor lifted a desperate eye and exclaimed: "Two sword-cuts, two stabs with a knife, two thrusts with a dagger! Select one of those arms up there; choose the one that will slice the best and kill me straight off!" He indicated some martial trophies hanging on the wall. The persistent playwright stood upon his rights. The Government had appointed Baron Taylor *commissaire du roi* and it was his duty to listen to plays. "That is where the misfortune comes in!" cried the wretched Baron Taylor. "You and such people as you will make me hand in my resignation. I will go to Egypt! I will explore the sources of the Nile as far as Nubia! I will go to the Mountains

MONALDESCHI BEFORE QUEEN CHRISTINE

*The bas-relief by Mlle. de Fauveau which suggested the play* Christiné *to Dumas*

MADEMOISELLE GEORGES

*The shadow of Bonaparte still hovered about her and made her an object of awed curiosity to the populace*

of the Moon!" "You can go to China if you like," returned the unfeeling dramatist, "but not until you have heard my play." Baron Taylor

*. . . bowed his comely head*
*Down as upon a bed*

and said nothing more. Dumas quietly withdrew to the next room and sat there waiting while the drone of the persistent playwright went on and on. The young man could picture the prostrate form of Baron Taylor in the cold bath-tub and his heart bled for him. At the same time he began to realize that this was not exactly the auspicious moment in which to inflict five more acts in couplets upon the commissioner. Perhaps he had better go, creep out quietly, and come back another day. Even while he was meditating this the drone of the author of *Hécube* ceased, his feet sounded along the hall, the door closed with a bang and double-locks were hastily snapped in place. Baron Taylor, a bath-robe drawn tightly about his shivering form, entered the room and stared curiously at the young man and suspiciously at the bundle of manuscript he clutched in his hand. Dumas rose to his feet.

"Perhaps," he said, "another time . . . you must be tired . . ."

Baron Taylor shook his head like a martyr when some matter-of-fact pagan offers to put out the flames.

"Now that you are here," he said, "go on."

He crawled into bed gloomily and hauled the blanket up about his shivering shoulders.

"I will stop whenever it bores you," remarked Dumas unrolling his bundle of paper.

A glint of amusement shone for an instant in Baron Taylor's eyes.

"You are merciful," he murmured.

Dumas began to read but his voice shook so with nervousness that he could not proceed. Baron Taylor reassured him and the young man, pale and perspiring, reached the end of the first act. Without daring to lift his eyes Dumas stuttered: "Shall I go on?" A resonant, "Certainly, certainly," answered him, and Dumas plunged with more confidence into the second act. His courage began to return, his faith in his play and the romantic innovations that adorned it. He swept through the third act, the fourth, the fifth, and then stood up in front

of Baron Taylor and waited. He waited like a man facing a firing squad, his head high and his lips tightly compressed. He did not wait long. Baron Taylor leaped out of his bed and shouted loudly, "Pierre!" An old man-servant stumbled in and Baron Taylor ordered that his clothes be brought immediately. "You must come to the Théâtre-Français with me," he said, turning to Dumas as he pulled his shirt over his head. "What must I do there?" inquired the young man. "Why, get your turn to read your play as soon as possible," answered Baron Taylor. "Do you really mean it!" exclaimed Dumas. Baron Taylor hopped about as he invested himself with his trousers.

The green room of the Théâtre-Français was crowded with a large group of men and women. There were Mademoiselle Mars, Mademoiselle Leverd, Mademoiselle Bourgoin, Madame Valmonzey, Madame Paradol and Mademoiselle Demerson, all decked out in gay hats and carrying bouquets, their wide skirts swishing over the green carpet as they swayed in like so many proud swans. The men, Baron Taylor, Firmin, Michelot, Joanny, Delafosse, Marius, Dumilatre, were in fashionable dress, their pointed boots, gloves and sticks glittering in the soft light that filtered through the windows. Dumas, seated beside a small table upon which a silent employee had gravely placed a glass of water, looked about him with glazed eyes. His throat was dry and he was sure that he would croak when he started to read. Here they all were, the stars of the Théâtre-Français, the most noted names in the dramatic world of Paris (which was to say France) observing him with bright and curious eyes, whispering to one another, moving about, settling down, waiting to vote their opinion on *Christine*. The young man did not dare to imagine what the verdict would be. He was not as valiant before these assembled stars as he was before Mélanie. Baron Taylor called the Committee to order, Dumas opened his manuscript and began to read.

This first version of *Christine,* though romantic in temperament, still clung to the unities. The five acts took place at Fontainebleau and the rules articulated by Aristotle were rigidly observed. Still, there was a perplexing new spirit in this play, something that puzzled the assembled players as they listened to its exposition. It was expressed by Firmin after the reading when Dumas had been sent from the

room so that the Committee might deliberate freely without the embarrassment of the author's presence. Firmin came into the hall and exclaimed: "Our difficulty is this: we do not know whether the play is classic or romantic." "Never mind," replied Dumas. "Is it a good play or a bad one?" This did not solve the problem for the Committee. Dumas, from his refuge in the hall, heard the mingled gabble of voices and waited impatiently. Would they never end? What did it matter whether or not the play could be catalogued as classic or romantic? As a matter of fact, it was a romantic theme in a classical setting. Finally Dumas was called into the green room. He entered hesitantly and walked toward Baron Taylor who was smiling. The Baron explained that *Christine* was accepted subject to certain conditions. It must be read again. It must be submitted to the judgment of some acknowledged expert. All that Dumas heard was the word "accepted." He did not wait for the further deliberations that were to take place relative to this drama of his but seizing his manuscript and thanking Baron Taylor with French explosiveness he darted from the room. He ran through the streets ogling everybody he met, men and women alike, and barely restrained himself from rushing up to total strangers and exclaiming, "You haven't written *Christine*. You haven't just come away from the Théâtre-Français. You haven't been received with acclamation." He stumbled across gutters, darted in and out among the horses that were speeding along, and rushing up the stairs of his home, burst into his mother's room like a bombshell. "Received with acclamation, mother! received with acclamation!" he shouted. The amazed Madame Dumas imagined her son had taken leave of his senses. She began to worry about his absence from the Palais-Royal for he had not told her he was taking the day off. "Also," she added, "where is your play?" Dumas thrust his hand into his coat pocket and withdrew it with a wild look. He had lost *Christine*. It must have slipped from his pocket when he was darting across gutters and dodging the horses. "No matter," he said. "I know the play by heart. I will sit up all night and copy it out." His mother sighed, "You had better hurry to the Palais-Royal," she urged. Fifteen hundred francs in the pocket were better than fifteen thousand in the imagination to her. Dumas set off for the rue Saint-Honoré at a run and settled himself to his reports. He labored until six o'clock, then

sped home and passed the night copying out a new draft of *Christine*. Thus ended that momentous day, April 30, 1828.

The next day Dumas entered an office that had changed in appearance. Heretofore the clerks had adopted a mocking attitude toward the young man. His ambition had been a joke among them and his pre-emption of the office-boy's cubicle had not endeared him to a group that was, as a whole, gregarious and fond of conversing during the hours of work. This group had observed in the morning paper a notice conveying the information that the Théâtre-Français had accepted with acclamation a five-act tragedy by a young man employed in the administrative offices of Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans, and it clustered about the young man to felicitate him. Dumas also observed in the notice the unsuspected information that the aforesaid young man had had his way made easy for him by the Duc who had strongly recommended him to the Reading Committee. The author of *Christine* smiled a bit sourly at this falsification of facts. M. Deviolaine hid himself the greater part of the day but appeared long enough to heap some satirical scorn on *Christine* and prophesy that the tragedy would never be produced. Dumas listened with a smile. He could not be troubled now by the snorting of the boar-like director of his department. And when Firmin, the actor, appeared, M. Deviolaine disappeared in a cloud of stuttering oaths. He could not conceive the possibility of a produced play written by the ragged urchin who had run about the ruined cloister of St. Remy at Villers-Cotterets. It was inconceivable, one of those madnesses of fortune for which there was no logic.

Firmin had come to inform Dumas that M. Picard had been selected by the Committee as the proper judge and authority to read *Christine*. Picard enjoyed the absolute confidence of the Théâtre-Français. Dumas's face fell. He detested M. Picard as one of those old-fashioned pundits who had retarded the development of real drama in France as much as M. Scribe had advanced vaudeville. Nevertheless he must go. It was a reluctant young man who went to M. Picard's house with his newly copied script under his arm and rang the bell. He was received by a little deformed man with long hands, bright, snake-like eyes and a nose pointed like a weasel's. M. Picard received the play in a grudging manner, peered sharply at Dumas and invited him to

return in a week's time. Dumas passed a weary, endless, troubled week cheered only by his assignations with Mélanie. He had no confidence in M. Picard and he began to fear that his first burst of enthusiasm had been somewhat premature. Plays were not accepted and produced as easily as all that.

The week passed and Dumas, accompanied by Firmin, again mounted the steps of M. Picard's house. Weasel-snout met them at the door, ushered them in, bade them be seated, and inquired after their health. He smiled and his uneven teeth proved to be yellow. He bent toward Dumas and said:

"My dear monsieur, have you any means of livelihood?"

"I am a clerk at fifteen hundred francs a year in the establishment of Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans," replied Dumas. What was all this about, anyway?

M. Picard suddenly thrust a bundle of paper into Dumas's hands.

"Well, then," he said, still smiling, "my advice to you, dear boy, is to return to your desk . . . to return to your desk."

Dumas rose like an automaton, and, clutching the manuscript of *Christine* to his breast, marched out of the house without a word, leaving Firmin to find out what it was all about. M. Picard, the modern Molière, seemed to the young man the most repulsive creature he had ever met in his life. It had been the ancient situation of the traditionalist and the innovator. Old men who had placed themselves were always rude to young men who were striking out on new paths. There had been an emotional quiver in *Christine* which even its classical form could not quiet or disguise and this quiver had seemed to M. Picard the mere tawdriness of undisciplined presumptuousness. It was too ridiculous to discuss. All that M. Picard could do was to smile at this ambitious clerk and despatch him to his office. Dumas was shocked and dismayed. It had only been a week ago that he had read his play to the stellar lights of the French stage, that he had walked across the emerald carpet of the green room of the Théâtre-Français and received the encouraging smile of Baron Taylor. And now, this! Well . . . he would return to Baron Taylor . . . that breach in the Bastille of the Théâtre-Français . . . and see what could be done.

Baron Taylor's face was serious. He took the manuscript and requested Dumas to return on the morrow. Upon Dumas's reappearance the royal commissioner's face was not so serious. There was even the suspicion of a smile on it. He showed Dumas the first page of *Christine*. Across it was written, "Upon my soul and conscience, I believe *Christine* to be one of the most remarkable works that I have read in twenty years. Charles Nodier." "I needed that to back me up," remarked Taylor, and, while Dumas was planning a thousand notes of thanks to Nodier and determining to buy him all the Elzevirs in the world, the royal commissioner went on to explain that there must be another reading and that M. Samson would have the final word upon it. Dumas's fate was still in the balance but he walked out of Baron Taylor's office with a certain gaiety. M. Samson was a practical man and he would know the dramatic possibilities of *Christine*. After all, Dumas was writing directly for actors; his plays were "good theater" and it was robust action that he desired to picture on the stage of the Théâtre-Français. Let M. Picard and M. Arnault and M. Lemercier be as stiltedly literary as they pleased; what Dumas aimed at was the fire of life, the movement he had sensed in the Shakespearean productions of the English players and the naturalness of human actions under the stress of melodramatic passions.

The second reading of *Christine* took place on a Sunday. A larger congregation of players than the first crowded into the green room of the Théâtre-Français and a more enthusiastic reception of *Christine* than before greeted the reading. M. Samson was practical. He had made many notes and when he approached the young playwright he had some astonishing changes to suggest. M. Samson was a romantic at heart also, even more daring than Dumas. He calmly destroyed the unities, suggested changes of locale, pointed out the necessity of a new romantic character, and otherwise entangled the simple scheme that Dumas had created. At first the young playwright was indignant. This mangling of his child seemed horrible, but Samson possessed both reason and power on his side. The result was that Dumas entirely recast his tragedy. The five unified acts were rewritten into a prologue, two acts in Sweden, three acts in Fontainebleau and an epilogue. In this way the time-honored structure of the French tragedy was smashed to pieces. There was nothing to do after these labors,

which seemed to Dumas like an illegal vivisection of an innocent child, but to turn the play in to the Théâtre-Français and wait patiently for the first call to rehearsals.

Meanwhile much was transpiring. Soulié's *Roméo et Juliette* had been accepted by the Odéon and was about to be produced. The two men had not met since that evening when Soulié had told Dumas to proceed with his *Christine,* but Soulié in spite of his pride and stubbornness remained cognizant of the younger man and he saw to it that his ambitious rival received two seats for the opening night of *Roméo et Juliette.* Soulié belonged to the new school and the opening night proved to be a vague tremor and prophecy of those embattled premières that were to follow and culminate with the forty triumphant representations of Victor Hugo's *Hernani.* Very slowly the two armies, romanticists and traditionalists, were arranging their forces and preparing for slaughter. Dumas thought Soulié's *Roméo et Juliette* dull but that was because he had already witnessed several performances of this tragedy by the English players. What he called Soulié's "excessive good taste" in improving Shakespeare jarred his romantic sensibilities. The general public, however, liked the play well enough. Its romantic tendencies had been sufficiently classicised to ease the shock the traditionalists rather expected. Though the battle-lines were forming the real bomb was yet to be exploded, and the young man who was to concoct that bomb had not even discovered his subject. The road from the vivisection of *Christine,* however, was to lead straight to *Henri III et sa cour.*

*Christine,* for her part, began to experience unsuspected obstacles at the Théâtre-Français. The casual and abrupt judgment of the weasel-snouted M. Picard had injected a sly poison into the first and unthinking enthusiasm of the players. Mademoiselle Mars cooled decidedly in her study of the title rôle. She was a head-strong, conceited favorite who had triumphed in the leading parts of Racine and she announced that *Christine* was beneath her powers. What was Dumas to do with a temperamental creature who flung her dressing-room window open after he left and exclaimed, "Faugh! He stinks like a negro!" Firmin, an excellent actor, who had been cast for Monaldeschi, experienced a growing uneasiness over the part. Ligier, who was to play Sentinelli, withdrew from the Théâtre-Français and

went to the Odéon. The truth was that these players trained to a tradition were afraid to venture too far from that tradition. The crown which had seemed just within the grasp of Dumas steadily removed itself from his eager reach. He ran about arguing, pacifying, compromising. His activities were of no avail. There was too much adverse influence directed against *Christine*. This innovation, compromising with the old tradition as it did, frightened the mimes, who were at best the animated puppets of fashion, and disturbed the directors, who had yet to emancipate themselves from the traditionalist influence. The Bastille still held firm and although Ange Pitou had penetrated to the outer courts he had still to destroy the oubliettes. The instant was not quite ripe for the thunderclap of romanticism.

A thunderclap did sound, however, for Dumas. He heard that a second *Christine,* the work of a former prefect named Brault, had been offered to the Théâtre-Français. M. Brault desired that the title role be played by Madame Valmonzey; Madame Valmonzey was the mistress of M. Evariste Dumoulin; M. Evariste Dumoulin was the editor-in-chief of *Le Constitutionnel; Le Constitutionnel* was one of the most powerful journals in Paris. The inferences are plain enough. M. Évariste Dumoulin intimated that he would ruin the Théâtre-Français by means of *Le Constitutionnel* unless M. Brault's *Christine* was produced before M. Dumas's play. The directors were in a high state of fear and excitement at this intimation. They cowered before the imposing figure of M. Evariste Dumoulin, and Madame Valmonzey walked about the theatre with an anticipatory smile upon her plump features. A feeling of despair settled upon Dumas, who found himself helpless in the face of all this intrigue. When the directors approached him and explained that M. Brault was suffering from an incurable disease and that his one hope in life was to see his *Christine* produced before he died the young man flung up his arms in abandonment. M. Brault's son came to Dumas and expatiated upon the fatal illness of his father. If M. Dumas needed a loan . . . The Duc de Décazes, a personal friend of M. Brault's, also came to the young man. The wishes of a dying man. . . If M. Dumas needed any money. . . . Dumas, with a sigh, signed a release of its obligation for the Théâtre-Français. His mythical crown had disappeared in a dark and

forbidding cloud. M. Brault's *Christine* was announced for immediate production.

Mélanie who continued to suffer from dyspepsia heard the story of Dumas' first skirmish and defeat with the Théâtre-Français with mingled emotions. She desired the success of the young man, but, from various unguarded remarks of Dumas', she had gathered that there was an unpleasantly large group of handsome women at the national institution. Several of these women had cast melting eyes upon the tall, young playwright, and Dumas, strutting like a turkey-cock before this admiration, had responded quickly and eagerly. A small demon of jealousy crept into Mélanie's mind and disturbed her days. Recriminations began to creep into her speech. Dumas, tired of her eternal dyspepsia and neurotic tendencies, decided that his *grande passion* had about run its course. Still, it was too soon to break off relations. There was still a charm, diminished to be sure, in this liaison with the sickly poetess. Then too, there were the moments of passion when Mélanie, with all the fierce ardour of a diseased woman, clung to him and whispered words of delirious love into his ear. The delight of conquest was strong in the young man and he responded with his usual self-dramatization. Between love and clerical duties he passed some few weeks seeking vaguely for a new subject that might make a play.

Soulié met him one day on the street and stopped him. There was a smile on the older man's face.

"Congratulate me," he said.

"What for?" asked Dumas. "For *Roméo et Juliette?* Frédéric, I thought it dull."

"No, no," answered Soulié. "I have finished my *Christine.*"

"Yes?" said Dumas.

"It has been accepted by the Odéon," proceeded Soulié.

"Yes?" said Dumas.

"Mademoiselle Georges and Ligier are to play the leading parts."

"Yes?" said Dumas.

# CHAPTER SIX

## TAKING THE BASTILLE

Near the Quai des Célestins and overlooking the river was an ancient gloomy-looking edifice called the Arsenal. It was here that François I had the cannon cast which did such deadly work at Pavia. Partly demolished during the reign of Henri II, by a tremendous explosion of the gunpowder stored in it, this building was reared anew by Charles IX and finished by the nasal-voiced Henri IV. Henri gave it to his minister of finance, Sully. In the course of time it became a library, and the beautiful rooms once decorated by the parsimonious Sully with Henri IV's money were crowded with endless shelves of rare and curious tomes. One entered the Arsenal by an ugly door, mounted a flight of steps with massive balustrades, came to a badly fitting portal on the left, walked down a bricked corridor and entered the apartment of the librarian, Charles Nodier. It was a journey Dumas often took now, for ever since Nodier had aided him with the unfortunate *Christine* the Arsenal had been flung open to the young man. It was a finishing school for him, a post-graduate course in literary Paris. Here during a period of several years he met most of the younger writers of the day and a number of the older figures. There was laughter, song, conversation, dancing. Above all there was Charles Nodier himself, learned, kindly, sprightly-minded and bubbling with paradoxes. Nodier, his wife and daughter were charmed from the first by Dumas and within a short space of time the tall young man was an accepted member of the lively household. He found there an agreeable and animated domesticity he had never known in his own life, a laughing suaveness, a mellowed sophistication, an atmosphere sparking with cultured argument and aesthetic

formulations. What a relief it was from the injustice and intrigues of the Théâtre-Français, the jealous reproaches of Mélanie, the stupid routine of the Palais-Royal, and the empty laughter of the cafés. Here Dumas could be himself, could expand, could catch the ball of conversation and juggle it back and forth with other writers.

Nodier was an ideal host. His friends, once he had accepted them, might dine with him as often as they liked. At six o'clock the table was laid for the regulars with always two or three extra plates put out for chance comers. The habitués were Gailleux, the director of the Musée; Baron Taylor, already meditating his relinquishment of the onerous post of Royal Commissioner of the Théâtre-Français and a journey into Egypt; Francis Wey and Dauzats. The casual diners were Bixio, Saint-Valéry and Dumas. Dinner was simple, for Nodier had simple taste. When it was over he would loll back in his chair and sip his Mocha (for he did not approve of rising from table to drink coffee in a half-warmed *salon*) and inhale his liqueur. Madame Nodier, Marie and Dumas, who took neither coffee nor liqueurs, would vanish into the *salon* and light the lustres and candalabras. Five minutes after the room was lighted and the gentle glow of the candles was reflected in the creamy walls Baron Taylor and Cailleux would amble in and sink into the plush warmth of the sofa. Then would come Nodier, his arm interlaced in that of Bixio or Wey or Dauzats, for he was like a tall climbing plant that needed something to lean upon. Ten minutes later the usual callers began to arrive, their feet clicking in the brick corridor as they hurried to the *salon*. There were Alfred and Tony Johannot, both of whom were to die young and who already had the melancholy look of the grave upon their impassive faces. Tony always brought a fresh drawing or engraving to enrich Marie Nodier's album. There was Fontaney who also seemed to have a vague presentiment of death. There was Alfred de Vigny, not yet transfigured in his own mind and still deigning to mix with mortals. There was Barye the sculptor, who appeared to walk in a dream listening to far-away voices. There was Louis Boulanger, the artist, changeable as an April day, now sad, now roaring with laughter. There was Francisque Michel, a seeker of old manuscripts, so forgetful that he would arrive occasionally in an old hat of the period of Louis XIII and yellow slippers. There was Alfred de Mus-

set, just beyond the state of boyhood and dreaming his *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie*. There was Victor Hugo, a stocky youth with a noble forehead and already a celebrity. There was Lamartine, restrained and grave in demeanor.

Sometimes Charles Nodier would draw up his tall, lean body beside the chimney-piece, stretch out his thin arms ending in white tapering hands and start to tell a story. It did not matter what the tale might be, an imaginary narrative of love, a skirmish on the plains of La Vendée, some drama of the Place de la Révolution, a conspiracy of Georges Cadoudal or Oudet, the result would always be the same. From his lips would issue such engaging description that his attentive audience would hold its breath that it might hear the better. Belated guests who entered while Nodier was in the midst of a story would slide quietly into chairs or lean against the wainscoting. These stories would always end too soon. Nodier would seat himself in his arm-chair, and indicating Victor Hugo or Lamartine, murmur: "Enough of prose. Let us have poetry." And one or the other man indicated would rise without a second bidding and recite some recent composition. Dumas was enchanted. As he listened to the delightful stories of Nodier or the odes of Lamartine and Victor Hugo or the arguments of the assembled artists and writers he seemed to be existing in a sort of Paradise guarded from the brawling world of Paris by the thick forbidding walls of the Arsenal.

When ten o'clock struck Marie Nodier would seat herself before her piano and stir the instrument to a ripple of notes. Arm-chairs were scraped back against the wall, and non-dancers with a penchant for card playing would hasten into the alcoves. Nodier, who did not dance but liked cards, would disappear into some corner. After he had played *bataille* or *écarté* for a short time he vanished entirely. In other words, he betook himself to bed and permitted the party to proceed without him. It was the duty of Madame Nodier to put this great child to bed. She would leave first and if it were winter or the kitchen fire had extinguished itself she might be seen presently threading the dancers with a huge warming-pan which she would fill at the fireplace. Nodier followed the warming-pan as a cat follows a saucer of milk and was seen no more. Meanwhile the dancing would continue to the accompaniment of Marie Nodier who, unlike her

VICTOR HUGO

*The Sun-God, in spite of his jealousy, remained a good friend to Dumas*

ALFRED DE VIGNY

*He was one of the Romantic triumphirate with Dumas and Hugo*

father, was not given to retiring at early hours. Dumas, whose dancing had improved since those far-off days when he had burst his trousers leaping the Haha, was one of the popular figures during this lighter side of the evening. His spontaneous wit and freshness also made him a favorite. He could say to Saint-Valéry, who was extremely tall and very sensitive about his height, when that individual complained of a cold in the head, "Didn't you have cold feet a year ago?"

It is impossible to estimate how much these evenings brought to Dumas but it is obvious that they contributed materially to his future. He met men there who were to be of service to him in later years, and any rough surfaces that five years of Paris had not smoothed away were eradicated by the *politesse* of the Nodier household. A great amount of information was sifted into his quick mind. Books and literary movements and theories were made plain for him. The conversation of writers about his own age, such as Victor Hugo, must have been important to him. The Arsenal, then, as has been said, was a finishing school for him, a place where he might orientate himself squarely in the fluctuating and perplexing literary world of the day. And when, after one o'clock in the morning, he came forth from the Arsenal and crossed the moonlit and deserted expanse of the Ile-Saint-Louis, threading his way among houses and along streets that antedated the Revolution, his head must have been full of a jumble of things, Nodier's satiric mouth, the pretty little feet of Madame Nodier, the white hands of Marie Nodier, the high, sweet sounds of an old piano, the emphatic tones—so like bugle-cries—of the square-browed Victor Hugo, the grave political opinions of Lamartine who was both statesman and poet, the wistful voice of young de Musset who talked of the joys of Italy and Spain and the smiling lips of Mimi Pinson, the strange tones of the long, fair-haired de Vigny, who, perhaps, was already moved to tears at the thought of Chatterton, the shrill laughter of Boulanger and the booming echo of Barye, the suppressed coughs of the Johannots, the pictures, the ancient folios with the arms of the kings of France upon them, the soft firelight before which the dancing figures moved, and the gentle glow of many candles in high silver candalabras upon the creamy whiteness of the panelled walls and the Louis XV mouldings.

Anquetil's *Esprit de la Ligue* lay open on the accountant's desk and Dumas, still exhilarated by the last evening's conversation at the Arsenal, glanced at the page as he fumbled for some extra copying paper. He read mechanically:

> Although attached to the king, and by rank an enemy of the Duc de Guise, Saint-Mégrin was none the less in love with the duchess, Catherine de Clèves, and it was said that she returned his love. The author of this anecdote gives us to understand that the husband was indifferent on the subject of his wife's actual or supposed infidelity. He opposed the entreaties of his relations that he should avenge himself, and only punished the indiscretion or the crime of the duchess by a joke. One day he entered her room early in the morning, holding a potion in one hand and a dagger in the other; after rudely awaking his wife and reproaching her, he said in tones of fury:
>
> "Decide, madame, whether to die by dagger or poison!"
>
> In vain did she ask his forgiveness; he compelled her to make her choice. She drank the concoction and flung herself on her knees, recommending her soul to God and expecting nothing short of death. She spent an hour in fear; and then the duc came back with a serene countenance, and told her that what she had taken for poison was an excellent soup. Doubtless this lesson made her more circumspect afterwards.

"What's this?" murmured Dumas and read through the page again, this time with more attention. He returned to his cubicle with a brooding expression on his face, and that evening when he called at M. Villenave's house to see Mélanie he ignored his somewhat impatient mistress and engaged in a long historical conversation with the old bibliophile. The *Biographie universelle* was referred to. M. Villenave rummaged among his folios and drew forth the *Mémoires de l'Estoile*. In the first volume of l'Estoile Dumas discovered this passage:

> Saint-Mégrin, a young gentleman of Bordeaux, handsome, wealthy, and good-hearted, was one of the curled darlings kept by

the king. One night when coming away, at eleven o'clock, from the Louvre, where the King was, in the rue du Louvre, near the rue Saint-Honoré, he was set upon by some twenty to thirty unknown men, with pistols, swords and cutlasses, who left him on the pavement for dead; he died, indeed, the next day, and it was a wonder how he could have lived so long, for he had received thirty-four or thirty-five mortal wounds. The king ordered his dead body to be carried to Boisy, near the Bastille, where Quélus, his companion, had died, and buried at Saint-Paul with as much pomp and solemnity as his companions Maugiron and Quélus had been buried before him. No inquiries were made concerning the assassination, His Majesty having been warned that it had been done through the instrumentality of the Duc de Guise, because of the reports of intimacy between the young mignon and the duc's wife, and that the blow had been dealt by one who bore the beard and features of his brother the Duc du Maine. When the King of Navarre heard the news, he said:

"I am glad to hear that my cousin the Duc de Guise has not suffered himself to be cuckolded by a *mignon de couchette* such as Saint-Mégrin; I wish all the other gilded youths about court who hang round the princesses ogling them and making love to them could receive the same treatment."

Further along in this same volume Dumas discovered another passage which he read most attentively.

On Wednesday, 19 August, Bussy d'Amboise, first gentleman-in-waiting of M. le Duc, Governor of Anjou, Abbé de Bourgueil, who assumed very high and mighty airs, because of the partiality of his master, and who had done all kinds of evil deeds and robbed the countries of Anjou and Maine, was slain by the Seigneur de Monsoreau, together with the wicked lieutenant of Saumur, in a house belonging to the said Seigneur de Monsoreau, where, at night, the said lieutenant, who was his love messenger, had brought him to sleep that night with the wife of the said Monsoreau, to whom Bussy had for a long time made love; with whom the said lady had purposely made this false assignation in order to have

him surprised by her husband, Monsoreau; when he appeared towards midnight, he was immediately surrounded and attacked by ten or a dozen men who accompanied the Seigneur de Monsoreau, and who rushed upon him in a fury to massacre him: this gentleman, seeing himself so contemptibly betrayed, and that he was alone (as on such expeditions people usually prefer to be) did not, however, cease to defend himself to the last, proving, as he had often said, that *fear had never found room in his heart*;—for so long as an inch of sword remained in his hand, he fought on till only the handle was left him, and then made use of tables, forms, chairs, stools, with which he disabled three or four of his enemies, until, overpowered by numbers and bereft of all arms and means of defending himself, he was beaten down, close to a window, from which he had tried to fling himself in the hope of escape. Such was the end of Captain Bussy. . . .

Dumas looked up.

"Here is my next drama," he said.

M. Villenave lumbered about searching for books that related to the period and brought the young man the *Confession de Sancy* and the *Ile des Hermaphrodites.* He referred Dumas to the recently published *Scènes Historiques* of Vitet. The young man, laden down with heavy tomes, proceeded home. He sat up most of the night reading these volumes, searching for dramatic situations, recalling his five years' immersion in Scott and Schiller and Lope de Vega, and building up a romantic scaffolding of action. Before the dawn crept over the huddled roofs of Paris he had conceived the first outline of *Henri III et sa Cour,* the drama that was to be the first actual bombshell of the romantics.

Once he had conceived his subject Dumas wrote with surprising rapidity. Two months after the plot of *Henri III et sa Cour* had crystallized in his mind he was adding the finishing touches to the manuscript. He had profited from the rewriting of *Christine* to such an extent that he now knew exactly what he was about before he put pen to paper. *Henri III et sa Cour* was thrilling and romantic; it was written in prose instead of verse; it moved through a series of

acts each culminating in a higher degree of climax that the preceding. When the play was finished the young author was in a much better position to place it than he had been with *Christine*. He possessed influential friends. There were M. Villenave and his household. There was above all the Arsenal and all its important figures, including Baron Taylor. First of all Dumas read *Henri III et sa Cour* to the Villenave family. Mélanie was thrilled by it but M. Villenave, old-fashioned and brought up on Baour-Lormian and his school, was shocked by the romantic emphasis which he considered a monstrous aberration. Dumas smiled at this and revised not a single line of his play. He was through with the pedantries of the older men, fully enlisted in that embattled group of younger men that circled about Victor Hugo, determined to follow a path that seemed predestined. Already the formidable murmur of those younger men echoed through the cafés and studios of Paris. The hour of attack had arrived and the romanticists were merely marking time for the proper excuse. New journals had sprung up, journals like *Figaro* and *Sylphe* which were calculated to combat the grumbling conservatism of the *Constitutionnel,* the *Journal de Paris,* the *Courrier français* and the *Journal des Débats*. These papers were edited by Nestor Roqueplan, Alphonse Royer, Louis Desnoyers, Alphonse Karr and a dozen other fearless champions of the Romantic Movement. Dumas knew which way the wind was blowing. He was no longer ignorant. He understood the importance of a valiant and importunate army of disciples behind one's efforts. He decided to enlist these younger men.

Nestor Roqueplan possessed a studio. It was quite unlike that suite of apartments at the Opéra which he was to have years later, a suite ornamented by Boule and with corner-stones from Coromandel. The studio of 1828 was a small room on the fifth floor with a chimney-piece ornamented with a wash-basin instead of a clock and with a brace of duelling pistols instead of candlesticks. Here one evening a score of people assembled to Dumas's call. They were not Carbonari but Romanticists. They were not conspirators but the commanding officers of a campaign that was to be fought, a campaign that rivalled in importance any of the campaigns of Napoléon. The children born beneath the suns of Austerlitz had taken the sword into their hands.

Among this group were Roqueplan, the Murat of the movement, Royer, Desnoyers, Karr, Vaillant and Dorval. Firmin, from the Théâtre-Français, was there, and so, too, was Dumas's old friend, Lassagne, who now saw his prophecy coming true. These men hauled the mattresses from the bed to form divans and transformed the bed itself into a sofa. Before them stood Dumas by a small table lighted by candles. A kettle bubbled on the fire so that tea might be served between each act. *Henri III et sa Cour* was about to be revealed for the first time. He began to read in a steady voice.

*Henri III et sa Cour* enjoyed its first triumph that evening. The auditors were enthusiastic and with one accord they bade the young playwright set aside any plans he might have for the production of *Christine* and concentrate on this drama. Firmin, his eyes glistening at the opportunity which the part of Saint-Mégrin would afford him, offered to hurry forward a reading at the Théâtre-Français. Lassagne cried: "You were only half right in *Christine,* you are altogether right in *Henri III.*" Some of the young men began to repeat the sounding oaths from the play. *"Tête-Dieu!" "Mille damnations!" "Par la mort-Dieu!" "Vive-Dieu!"* Many feet trampled down the long flights of stairs from Nestor Roqueplan's studio, capes were flung about swaggering shoulders and the Romantics were off to tell their less fortunate friends in the cafés the news of the stirring play. The gloomy facade of the Théâtre-Français stared across at the Café de la Regence blindly. How were those brown-yellow walls ornamented with the stony faces of Racine and Corneille to understand that they were to be breached, that a shouting mob of young men were to rush through them, that *Henri III et sa Cour* was to be the Valmy of the literary revolution fought between them, that de Vigny's *Othello* was to follow up and consolidate this victory, and that Victor Hugo's *Hernani* was to be the Jemappes that carried the revolution well on the way to victory? The walls of the Théâtre-Français were as deaf and blind and senseless as the walls of the Bastille and could not hear those strange oaths at its portal. *"Tête-Dieu!" "Vive-Dieu!" "Par la mort-Dieu!"*

Firmin, true to his word, secured an early reading of *Henri III et sa Cour* and on September 15, 1828, Dumas found himself for a third time on the emerald-hued carpet of the greenroom of the Théâtre-

Français and declaiming from his own manuscript. There was no Picard of the weasel snout there. Instead, there was Béranger, the great Béranger whose *chansons* had made him the idol of the Parisian populace, the man of whom Benjamin Constant had said, "Good old Béranger! He thinks he is writing chansons and really he is composing odes!" Béranger was at the peak of his fame in 1828. He was hailed as the greatest poet of the age. *Vieux drapeau, Dieu des bonnes gens* and *Grand'mère* were sung by thousands. Dumas did not fear Béranger, for he had faith in the fiery socialism of the man, a socialism that expressed itself in political *chansons* that were like so many blows of a pickaxe undermining the foundations of a throne, and though Béranger might not see eye to eye with the Romanticists (he was too old for that) the young playwright was sure that the classicists possessed no hold on the old lion. And there was Baron Taylor, one of Dumas's companions during the evenings at the Arsenal and ready to back the young man to the limit. There were Samson, whose romantic tendencies had expressed themselves in the revision of *Christine,* and Firmin, who was eager for the part of Saint-Mégrin. Mademoiselle Mars was present and Mademoiselle Mars was as temperamental as ever; but the part of the Duchesse de Guise made her open her histrionic eyes very wide, indeed. Mademoiselle Leverd and M. Michelot were also present. And seated in a corner in her simple black dress and appearing slightly ill at ease was Madame Dumas. The reading proved to be a great success. Béranger, a trifle lost in the unexpected technique at first, found himself before the play was over and prophesied that it would be a vast triumph. The five comedians of the Théâtre-Français were enchanted. Each one of them saw a magnificent part in the play, Saint-Mégrin for Firmin, the Duchesse de Guise for Mademoiselle Mars, Henri III for Michelot, the Vicomte de Joyeuse for Samson and Catherine de Medicis for Mademoiselle Leverd. A contagious enthusiasm seized this group of listeners. Two days later, on the seventeenth, the play was read before the formal committee and received with acclamations. That evening everything was settled at once, contracts were signed, rôles distributed, and the *mise-en-scène* outlined and applied for to the Administration. During the committee reading Dumas noticed a pretty young actress with bright

eyes named Louise Despréaux and he went to his assignation with Mélanie in a rather thoughtful manner.

M. de Broval lifted his long red nose from the sheet of paper and stared solemnly at Dumas. He cleared his throat. He explained that literature and clerical work were incompatible, that Dumas was oftener out of the Palais-Royal than in it, that when he was in it he was being continually interrupted by actors and messengers from the Théâtre-Français, that M. Deviolaine could not and would not have his Forestry Department so upset, and that M. Dumas, therefore, must immediately make his choice between the two incompatible occupations. Dumas immediately made his choice and when he returned to his department he was informed that he might occupy his time in any way he saw fit as his salary was suspended from that day. Dumas put on his hat and walked out of the Palais-Royal heedless of the muttered remarks of the clerks. It was as easy as this. For six years he had kept his nose to the grindstone and received nothing for his pains. Now all he had to do was to say three words to M. de Broval, put on his hat and walk out. A curious feeling of freedom coursed through his veins as he walked along the rue Saint-Honoré. At the same time an ominous nervousness settled upon him. There would be no rouleaux of francs at the end of the month. What would his mother say? She was so thin and worried now and her heart beat so rapidly at the least excitement. He would have to do something to tide over the weeks of rehearsals. Well, there was Béranger. Béranger had been surprisingly agreeable to him at the reading of *Henri III et sa Cour* and Béranger was the personal friend of the great banker, M. Laffitte. M. Laffitte sometimes . . . There would be no harm in trying.

Dumas turned in at the Théâtre-Français and told his trouble to Firmin. Firmin recalled that M. Laffitte had once helped Théaulon when that classic playwright was in a fix. The actor accompanied Dumas to Béranger's house. Béranger took the two men to the mansion of M. Laffitte. M. Laffitte listened. His manner was cold. He was not interested in the Romantic Movement. Béranger intimated that the play would make a financial success. M. Laffitte listened to this more closely. He *was* interested in finance. The outcome was

that M. Laffitte advanced Dumas three thousand francs after the young dramatist had signed a promissory note and deposited a copy of *Henri III et sa Cour* with the banker's cashier as security. "Nothing for nothing and something for something" was M. Laffitte's motto. Dumas shook hands with M. Laffitte who withdrew his hand hastily and with Béranger who held his hand longer. Then he ran home.

Bad news travels on the wings of the wind and it reached Madame Dumas before her son. When he burst into the house she was in a state of extreme despair. This time, she thought, her son had settled himself for good. He had lost his position and he had no funds. It was well enough to write plays but where was the certainty about plays? *La Chasse et l'Amour* and *La Noce et l'Enterrement* had made a few hundred francs, but those windfalls had been dissipated in a few months. What would Alexandre do when the few hundred francs from *Henri III et sa Cour* had gone the way of the wind? Would he creep back to the Palais-Royal and attempt to ingratiate himself with M. de Broval, M. Deviolaine and M. Oudard? At that moment her son burst in and placed three one-thousand franc notes, two years' salary, in her lap. In the evening Dumas called at the Villenave household and explained his break with the Palais-Royal. M. Villenave, a conservative old gentleman, disapproved, but Théodore agreed that Dumas was right. As for Mélanie, she said very little and continued to brood. When Dumas rose to leave she accompanied him to the door. "Are you interested in that little ingénue, Louise Despréaux?" she inquired. Dumas hastily disclaimed any interest in Mademoiselle Despréaux. He was right. He had already noticed another young actress cast for the slight part of Marie in *Henri III et sa Cour*. Her name was Virginie Bourbier and she had blue eyes.

The opening of 1829 was a period of excitement for Dumas and one of repressed passion for Paris. Charles X was showing his teeth. A fortnight after Béranger had aided Dumas so materially, the revolutionary-minded composer of *chansons* was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment for writing the *Ange Gardien,* the *Gérontocratie* and the *Sacre de Charles le Simple.* M. Viennet, one of the conservatives and a writer of turgid epic poems, visited Béranger in prison. "Well,

noble songster," he remarked, "how many *chansons* have you composed under lock and key?" Béranger looked at him. "Not one," he replied, "Do you suppose *chansons* are written as easily as epic poems?" The victim of this retort was the M. Viennet who once burst into the Arsenal with the proud statement: "Listen, dear friends; I have just finished an epic of thirty thousand lines! What do you think of that?" "Think?" answered one of the young men present. "Why, I think it will take fifteen thousand men to read it!" A little more than a year later the autocratic government which had imprisoned Béranger and a dozen others, suppressed free opinion with an iron hand and done its utmost to return France to the status of an absolute monarchy was driven from office and Charles X had fled across the border. While *Henri III et sa Cour* was in rehearsal Paris was muttering savagely to herself and preparing *la chute* for the King. At the same time the news of the impending production of a romantic drama in prose at the Théâtre Français, where heretofore the most daring experiments had been the timid and tentative presentations of such plays as Lemercier's *Jane Shore,* Mély-Janin's *Louis XI à Peronne,* and Lebrun's *Le Cid d'Andalousie,* created a great deal of excitement. Frequent items appeared in the press; camps were being formed of antagonists and protagonists; the Censor withheld his decision. As for the rehearsals of *Henri III et sa Cour,* they progressed to the usual temperamental upsets of Mademoiselle Mars. She desired Armand to play Henri III instead of Michelot. She insisted that Madame Menjaud be cast for the page Arthur in place of Louise Despréaux. Dumas maintained his own decisions and forced out both Armand and Madame Menjaud. He attended rehearsals assiduously ("Because of Virginie Bourbier," remarked Mademoiselle Mars contemptuously), aided in the direction, revised, and in short, adapted himself immediately to the practicalities of the stage. Dumas's sense of the theater was inborn and he was as much play-doctor and director as he was creator. As for Virginie Bourbier her blue eyes proved so pleasant that Dumas, with that superb tactlessness with women that probably enchanted as much as it displeased them, told Mélanie all about her. Poor Mélanie, her head whirling with Louise Despréaux, Virginie Bourbier, even Mademoiselle Mars, grew more and more jealous and dyspeptic.

The Censor, in spite of scandalizing items in the press relative to the indecency of introducing *mignons* on the stage of the Théâtre-Français, finally gave his consent to the production and the première was definitely set for Saturday evening, February 11, 1829.

Three days before the opening night, while Dumas was supervising the ensemble and costumes, he was interrupted by one of M. Deviolaine's servants who rushed into the theatre with the news that Madame Dumas while calling on Madame Deviolaine had been taken with a frightful seizure and was lying apparently lifeless in the Deviolaine home. A wild-eyed young man ran the short distance from the Théâtre-Français to the corner of the rue Saint-Honoré and the rue de Richelieu where M. Deviolaine resided. Madame Dumas, who had fallen in a senseless heap on the stairs as she was leaving, was now placed in a great arm-chair and she was slowly regaining consciousness, although she could hardly speak. One side of her body was paralyzed. Dumas felt his mother's pulse, pinched her to discover the extent of the paralysis, ordered mustard and hot water for her, and sent for a doctor. While he waited for the doctor he learned that the Deviolaine family had been impressing on Madame Dumas what a wilful blockhead her son was, how sure it was that his play would be a failure, and how impossible it would be for him ever to repay his loan to M. Laffitte. The young man dashed the hot tears from his eyes and said nothing. There was nothing he could say. Contemptuous ridicule and evil prophecy had been his portion since he was old enough to have ambitions. The doctor arrived and so, too Aimée-Alexandrine, who had come from Paris to witness the première of her brother's drama. A room was secured for Madame Dumas on the third floor of the Deviolaine home and the stricken woman was put to bed there. Dumas, torn between the duties of rehearsing his play and ministering to his mother, passed through three terrible days. When he was not at his mother's bedside he was urging on reluctant actors whose courage in the face of newspaper attacks was already oozing out at their buskins. Decidedly things were going wrong on all sides. A mother who might be dying, a play that was so remarkable an innovation as to arouse grave doubts of its success, a salaried position that had suddenly

ceased to exist, and the mingled ridicule and ominous prophecies of a group of people—this was the situation that Dumas had to face.

Thursday passed to strenuous work and trembling grief. Mélanie, who had missed Dumas, came to his house in search of him. Her reproaches, somewhat quieted by the young man's anxiety over his mother, did not tend to lighten him. Friday dawned, the day before the première, and news of antagonistic claques permeated the atmosphere. Dumas suddenly decided to take a desperate chance.

That evening he presented himself at the Palais-Royal and boldly inquired for the Duc d'Orléans. The request was so audacious that the attendants imagined Dumas had an audience with His Royal Highness and promptly communicated the name of the visitor to the duc. The duc, somewhat surprised, ordered Dumas to be ushered in. M. Dumas entered with that confidence which is sometimes the result of desperation. He lost no time in begging the duc's attendance at his première. The duc lazily declined, explaining that he was giving a dinner the following night to twenty or thirty visiting princes and nobilities and that as his dinner began at six and the play at seven there was no way to arrange for both. Dumas offered to put back the première of *Henri III et sa Cour* one hour if the duc would put forward his dinner the same period of time. The duc began to smile at this persistence but offered the argument that the house must be sold out and that, therefore, there would be no room for him and his guests. Dumas countered by declaring that he had held the whole first circle of the Théâtre-Français in the faint prospect of the duc's attendance. The duc had no more arguments and as he rather desired to see what his disgraced clerk had done, agreed to attend. Dumas then hurried back to his mother. She seemed to be sleeping, and Dumas walked to his own room and crawled into bed. He could not sleep. Tomorrow would solve the entire riddle. In the cafés that night the young romantics talked in loud confident voices, but their standard bearer lay in his bed staring silently at the ceiling.

Long before the hour set for the rise of the curtain snake-like queues of humanity formed before the portals of the Théâtre-Français. From the walls Racine and Corneille gazed down on this vociferous mob

with stony eyes. It pushed forward, shouted for the doors to open, bought cakes from itinerant vendors, listened to the *chanteurs* and burst into laughter at the not too obscure political references of the popular songs. This mob did not carry pikes and billhooks. There were no *bonnets rouges* or tricolored cockades. Neither did they face stone walls that were to be demolished or the black mouths of cannon that were to demolish them. Yet among them were the fomentors of revolution, men who regarded the Théâtre-Français as a Bastille that must be destroyed and reared anew as a temple of the goddess of romance. It was not a deliberate and prepared mob such as stormed the Théâtre-Français a year later at the première of *Hernani,* for the issues were not so clearly defined. Yet it was conscious that innovation was in the air and scattered through this mob were enough young students, artists, writers and journalists who sensed the momentousness of the evening. As eight o'clock approached the carriages of the nobility rattled up and disgorged group after group of expectant notables, princes whose bosoms were one flash of decorations and women covered with jewels. The Duc d'Orléans entered the theater on the arm of a friend, the crowd, with whom he was popular, cheering as he passed. Sober-faced conservatives and playwrights of the old school pushed their way through the lines and nodded coldly to Baron Taylor in the lobby. Dumas, who had passed the entire day by his mother's side, reached the theater late and crept through the doors and into a small box on the stage. From here he could see the house, a riot of movement and color, the first circle gleaming with stars of honor and diamond collars. In the balcony he perceived the solemn face of Porcher. He owed Porcher nearly a thousand francs. He looked elsewhere. In a box in the first tier sat Aimée-Alexandre, and beside her were Louis Boulanger, Victor Hugo and Alfred de Vigny. From the orchestra glowered M. Deviolaine. Near him was the long red nose of M. de Broval. M. Oudard's round bulldog features rose from a seat. The two first rows of boxes were crammed with the aristocracy of Charles X. Dumas viewed these unknown celebrities with a vague curiosity and then diverted his attention to an animated section of young men in cloaks and colored gilets who lifted their canes and shook them and shouted, *"Tête-Dieu!" "Par la mort-Dieu!" "Vive-Dieu!"* Roqueplan, Lassagne,

Rousseau, de Leuven, Alphonse Karr, Alfred de Musset, Royer, Desnoyers, Vaillant! It was the advance guard of the romantics, the first battalion of that army of young men who had come to destroy the tradition of stalking Frenchmen in laticlave, cothurnus and helmet. They were but a limited faction as yet but within a year they would command an army. *Henri III et sa Cour* was to be the preliminary skirmish, the Valmy of the new revolution, and through it the dispositions of the two antagonistic forces were to be made plain. Dumas was unknown. He was not like Victor Hugo in the box there whose *Odes et Ballades* and preface to Cromwell had made him the Napoleon of this campaign. Dumas's eyes turned from the animated young men to the sober face of Hugo. Both of them had possessed Revolutionary and Napoleonic officers as fathers. Both of them had been born during a tradition which they now strove to demolish. But there was no comparison between them. Hugo was dynamite and Dumas was fireworks. Dumas's eye continued to revolve about the theater. There, in a discreet corner, was Mélanie, leaning forward, an expression of frightened delight upon her dark face. Marie-Catherine was not present. Neither was Madame Dumas, who lay upon her bed in the Deviolaine house quite unconscious of what was occurring. The house was crowded now. Some of these impatient spectators had paid as much as twenty louis for a box. All faces turned toward the stage. There were three loud thumps behind the scene, a quivering of the great curtain as it rose slowly on the *cabinet de travail* of Ruggieri, astrologer and poisoner to Catherine de Medicis.

The sensation of a breath of fresh air swept across the perspiring brow of Dumas and he leaned forward in his seat, his gaze fixed intently on Saint-Aulaire and Mademoiselle Leverd who were playing Ruggieri and Catherine de Medicis. A brief buzz of excitement burst from the audience, for *Henri III et sa Cour* had been mounted meticulously, elaborate costumes of the period provided and special scenery painted by renowned artists. The Administration had left no stone unturned to perfect an extravagant and breath-taking *décor*. The opening act was but a foretaste of what was to follow. Ruggieri's *cabinet de travail* with its chemical retorts and its huge telescope pointing out a window was no more than a beginning. The audience

listened with patience to this long and somewhat tedious act in which the pawns of passion were properly placed and introduced. Catherine de Medicis plotted with Ruggieri to bring together Saint-Mégrin and the Duchesse de Guise. The meeting is effected and the Duchesse confesses her love to Saint-Mégrin. The *mignons* have their futures foretold. The Duc de Guise, wolfish and intense, comes too late to surprise the Duchesse and Saint-Mégrin. He finds her forgotten handkerchief, however, and the curtain falls to his fierce: *"Saint-Paul! qu'on me cherche les mêmes hommes qui ont assassiné Dugast!"* The curtain fell to a sudden ripple of applause that warmed the somewhat frightened players. Dumas slipped from his box, dashed out of the door of the theater and ran to the corner of the rue Saint-Honoré and the rue de Richelieu to see his sick mother. She was sleeping quietly, and he returned to the theater, arriving just in time to witness the curtain rising on a hall in the Louvre. Here the *décors*, the chairs and tabourets and the brilliantly costumed *mignons* accompanied by pages bearing their colors, aroused a spontaneous round of applause from the audience. The picture of a King of France playing with cup and ball and pea-shooters with his *mignons* had been feared by the actors but the spectators seemed vastly amused by it. They were thrilled, also, at the sight of the Duc de Guise in full armor, the elevation of Saint-Mégrin to a dukedom that he might meet Guise on equal ground, and Saint-Mégrin's resounding challenge to the husband of the woman he loved: *"Moi, Paul Estuert, seigneur de Caussade, comte de Saint-Mégrin, à toi, Henri de Lorraine, duc de Guise: prenons à témoin tous ceux ici présents, que nous te défions au combat à outrance, toi et tous les princes de ta maison, soit à l'épée seule, soit à la dague et au poignard, tant que le coeur battra au corps, tant que la lame tiendra à la poignée; renonçant d'avance à ta merci, comme tu dois renoncer à la mienne; et, sur ce, que Dieu et Saint Paul me soient en aide!"* How was the audience to know that this formula came from Walter Scott? It resounded from the mouth of Firmin and it was new. There was again a falling curtain to general applause, and for a second time Dumas ran out of the theater to minister to his mother. The third act was the crucial test of the play. Here was the scene between the page—a rôle in which Louise Despréaux exhibited two slender shapely limbs—and the Duchesse

de Guise and the mailed fist episode which Dumas had paraphrased from that scene in "The Abbott" in which Lord Lindesay clutches Mary, Queen of Scots, by the arm. If this second scene in which the Duc de Guise forces his wife to appoint a meeting with Saint-Mégrin failed, then the play would fail. It was awaited with tremors by Dumas and shudders by the principal players. The act swept to its crest to the increasing excitement of the audience; Guise seized his wife by the wrist with his mailed hand; Mademoiselle Mars cried in a voice of appalling anguish: *"Vous me faites bien mal, Henri; vous me faites horriblement mal. . . . Grâce! Grâce! ah!"* and as she turned to write the letter that was to lure her love to death her silken sleeve fell back revealing the terrible blue marks on her forearm. The shuddering audience exploded into thunders of applause. The romantics stood up in their seats and shouted. The crowded theater was in a nervous pandemonium. Dumas knew that his play had succeeded. From that moment *Henri III et sa Cour* proceeded to a continuous uproar of approval. The fourth act where Saint-Mégrin departs for his fatal assignation was one of quivering suspense. The fifth act continued to a delirium. Saint-Mégrin was cornered; the Duc de Guise and his wolves were at his heels; the unfortunate man leaped from the window and was slaughtered outside; the Duc de Guise dropped the handkerchief he had found in the first act with the cry: *"Eh bien, serre-lui la gorge avec ce mouchoir; la mort lui sera plus douce; il est aux armes de la Duchesse de Guise;"* the Duchesse fell to the floor with a cry; and the merciless Duc, turning with a ferocious look, exclaimed: *"Bien! et maintenant qui nous avons fini avec le valet, occupons-nous du maître."* Somewhere an imaginary Henri III may be supposed to have writhed uneasily upon his throne. The audience burst into clamors of hysterical approval and as Firmin advanced upon the stage leading Dumas by the hand and announced the name of the author, "Alexandre Dumas," in a loud voice, there was a ripple of movement in the first circle and the Duc d'Orléans stood up and was promptly followed by his guests. Firmin, who had epileptic tendencies and who was completely exhausted by his performance, trembled violently, and Dumas, gazing across the footlights at the flashing array of decorations and diamonds, began to tremble, too, but with a fever that was not fear. From a

cluster of seats he heard young voices piercing the sustained thunder of applause, shrill voices shouting: *"A bas Lemercier! A bas Alexandre Duval! A bas Arnault!"* and then again: *"Tête-Dieu! Par la mort-Dieu! Vive-Dieu!"* The romantics were hurling their first open challenges at the classicists. Dumas could see them all: Hugo and de Vigny standing at the front of the box like Napoleon and Masséna observing the progress of a battle; Roqueplan on the field itself like a Murat; Alphonse Karr, Lassagne, Royer, Desnoyers, Vaillant, Rousseau, a shouting vanguard of warriors. Deviolaine, who had been made ill by the play, was struggling up the aisle, and in her secluded corner Mélanie was weeping. Madame Malibran, clutching a pillar, was leaning out of her box. It was roses, roses all the way for the young man as he struggled through the swirling mob on his way to his mother's room.

The stars shone brighter as he hurried through the cobbled streets leaving behind him the lighted portico of the Théâtre-Français. He was no longer Dumas, under-clerk in the Duc d'Orléans' establishment; he was Alexandre Dumas, playwright and author of the successful *Henri III et sa Cour* which was running at the national house of drama. He was the John the Baptist of the Romantic Movement, the first man in France to break down the hide-bound traditions of the Théâtre-Français. Others might follow him with more venturesome and more striking productions but they could not take away from him his crown. He suspected that he possessed no style, and later comradeship with Hugo convinced him that he was unequal and unequipped for the leadership of the Romantic Movement, but he possessed the dash and gusto of the field-commander. He was like his father, General Alexandre Dumas, who was brave in battle, who could capture Mont-Cenis and hold the splintered bridge at Clausen, but who could never rate a maréchal's baton. Well, to Hugo the baton; to him the intuitive ability to hold the bridge. His mother was sleeping when he reached her room and he sat down by her bed, his head whirling with the excitement of the evening, and gazed at her for a long time. She had not witnessed this triumph. She had rested on her poor paralyzed side and slept through it all. Perhaps she was wiser than he, after all. She had heard of triumphs before, and all they meant to her now was a dusty sword hanging

on the wall and a grave without a stone on a forgotten hill-side. There was a letter lying on the floor near the door and Dumas picked it up and opened it. "I cannot sleep without first telling you, my dear young friend . . . splendid triumph . . . your laurels . . . success . . . in the future. . . ." He turned to the signature. Baron de Broval. M. de Broval of the Palais-Royal. It had been so short a time ago that M. de Broval had looked down his long red nose and suspended the young man from his humble duties. Tasting his first triumph Dumas sat by his mother's bed and observed the cold stars twinkling through the window.

Dumas awoke, like Lord Byron, to find himself famous. He had been unknown, a vague name to which no associations either favorable or antagonistic could be attached, the day before; and now, as this bright Sunday morning moved toward the mid-day, he found himself the talk of Paris. During the day hatreds and friendships sprang out of nothing. Shouting boys bearing huge bouquets mounted the stairs until the room was filled with flowers. Dumas covered his mother's bed with them and she reached out her unparalyzed hand to touch these bright colors, unaware that they were flowers or that they stood for triumph. Ricourt, the editor of *L'Artiste,* bustled in and bore him off to the studio of Achille Déveria where that black-eyed genius made an extraordinary etching of him. By two o'clock his manuscript had been sold for six thousand francs and Dumas ran downstairs to M. Deviolaine's apartment to show the old boar the bright new bills. "What!" cried M. Deviolaine, "Are there idiots who have bought your play from you!" and he raised his hands helplessly. Then he said: "Ah, if your father could only have been there!" Dumas hurried to M. Laffite's house and bought back his promissory note for three thousand francs. He returned to Porcher the thousand francs that gentle gambler had advanced him at odd times. Then he decided on an economic course; he compounded with the proprietor of the Café Desmares for one year's meals in consideration of eighteen hundred francs paid down immediately. It was a bad investment for the restaurant failed within a month. The day continued to be filled with excitement. Young romantics visited him and the conflicting opinions of the critics were already food for

vigorous argument. A letter from the Théâtre-Français hurried the excited young man there and he learned that the Censor was worried about the scene where Henri III plays cup and ball with his *mignons*. It seemed to that gentleman disrespectful to monarchy. Dumas secured an audience with M. de Martignac and agreed to a few alterations, most of them concerned with Michelot's rendering of the title rôle.

The days were a flurry of excitements and honors. David d'Angers made a medallion of Dumas which showed the young man with a curling pompadour and a small fluffy beard framing his face. Emile de Girardin invited him to contribute to *Le Voleur*. The Duc d'Orléans received him in the royal box at the second performance of *Henri III et sa Cour*. Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans welcomed him in private audience in her home and inquired about his mother. Dumas, though loudly Republican in his sympathies, could nevertheless be flattered by attentions such as these, and he loved to boast about them, to expatiate on his friendship with famous men of the era. It did not matter to what party they belonged, Béranger, the Duc d'Orléans, the Prince Napoleon, anybody in the public eye would do. The truth was that Dumas did not think deeply about these matters. He was impulsive and rather mixed in his standards. The final flattery came when the Duc d'Orléans appointed the playwright to the post of assistant librarian at the Palais-Royal, making Dumas assistant to Casimir Delavigne. He received only twelve hundred francs a year, the duc being as thrifty as ever, but the position was almost a sinecure. Dumas squared his position with his Republican principles by adroitly arguing that the Duc d'Orléans represented in Charles X's reign just that type of Republicanism for which the time called. It was a specious argument and the future Louis-Phillippe must have smiled to himself.

The question of living was easier now, and Dumas began to adopt that picturesqueness that was to continue throughout his days of affluence. He became more dandified than ever, wearing coats with rolled collars, rainbow-hued gilets and tight trousers. He carried a cane and affected an eye-glass. He bought a saddle horse and cantered forth in the morning. He acquired a servant named Joseph. Suddenly recalling Marie-Catherine and Alexandre *fils* he secured

a small house for them in Passy. For himself he took an apartment in the rue de l'Université which he furnished elaborately and where he gave extravagant dinners. He was on the top of the wave for the rest of the season of 1829, for *Henri III et sa Cour* with its forty-odd performances brought in some fifty thousand francs. Innumerable invitations were showered upon him, and M. Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, Minister of the King's Household, gave him free entry to all the royal theaters. Mademoiselle Mars, his brilliant Duchesse de Guise, recovered sufficiently from her former dislike of his negroid qualities, to invite him to late suppers in her apartment, where he met Vatout, author of *Histoire de la fille d'un Roi* and *Conspiration de Cellamare,* Romieu, General Denniée, Becquet of the *Journal des Débats* and author of *Mouchoir bleu* and Morny, that personification of aristocracy and elegance. He became a young Rastignac tasting the first fruits of conquest. It was very much like a romance to the young man who continued to dramatize himself with a gaudy eye for effect.

Meanwhile there was opposition enough to warn him that his victory was only tentative. The traditionalists were not defeated as easily as this. Stories began to creep about Paris that were warranted to belittle the romantics and exhibit them, including Dumas, as young barbarians. One tale insisted that after the premiére of *Henri III et sa Cour* a sabbatical dance took place around Racine's bust and that the dancers shouted "Racine is fallen!" and screamed for the heads of the Academicians. A fanatical romantic named Gentil, who suffered from the itch, was purported to go about scratching himself and shouting, "Racine is a scoundrel!" The hair of respectable conservative folk began to rise and murmurs of a new and imminent St. Bartholomew's Day were raised. When M. Auger, an unfortunate classicist, committed suicide it was whispered that he did so to escape the general massacre. The one classical play produced during the season, *Elizabeth d'Angleterre,* by M. Ancelot, was a flat failure. The Academicians gathered and discussed this new and barbarous invasion of the Théâtre-Français and a petition was sent to the King. This petition was a vigorous bit of polemic. "Whether from depravity of taste," it said in part, "or from consciousness of their inability to take his (Talma's) place, certain associates of the Théâtre-Français have

pretended that the method of art in which Talma excelled could no longer be beneficially carried on; they are seeking to exclude tragedy from the stage and to substitute for it plays composed in imitation of the most eccentric dramas that foreign literature affords—dramas which no one had ever dared before reproduce except in our lowest theaters." And again: "Ought the funds placed, by your liberality, at their disposal, in order to advance the cause of good taste, to be squandered over their own particular fancies, which tend to make the greatest names in Art subservient to the Melpomene of the boulevards, and to reduce their sublime art to the conditions of a vile trade?" This imposing document was signed by M. Arnault, Népomucène Lemercier, M. Viennet, M. de Jouy, M. Andrieux, Étienne Jay and Onésime Leroy. They were the Seven Worthies upholding Racine and Corneille against the world. Shortly after this manifesto M. Arnault intimated to Dumas that the young romantic's presence in his home, a cool temple of classicism, was not welcome. As abruptly as this one of the first doors that had opened for the unknown boy from Villers-Cotterets was closed against the alarming author of *Henri III et sa Cour*. Dumas did not worry about this defalcation of an old patron. There were too many new friends. Mademoiselle Duchesnois, won over by the classicists, and it is to be suspected, disappointed because she received no part in *Henri III et sa Cour,* also petitioned the King against the romantic inroads on the repertoire of the Théâtre-Français and cited Baron Taylor as the traitor in the camp. Charles X perused these petitions and drafted a brief answer. It read: "I cannot do anything in the matter you desire; I only occupy one seat in the theater, like every other Frenchman." This was cold comfort but it did not signify that the King was in any way favorable to the Romantic School. As a point of fact, he was out for bigger game than a few wild-eyed young playwrights. It was perceptible that the lines were clearly drawn now and that the decisive battle was in immediate prospect. Dumas, slightly intoxicated by the uproar he had occasioned and automatically one of the triumvirate with Hugo and de Vigny, strutted about Paris with an imperial air. The librarian at the Palais-Royal, Casimir Delavigne, viewed his assistant with an aggrieved eye, for Delavigne's *Marino Faliéro* was still champing at the bit and confined to its stall by the

success of Dumas's play. Eventually Delavigne withdrew it and gave it to the Porte-Saint-Martin theater. The grave librarian had not signed the manifesto, for he was neither classicist nor romanticist, neither fish nor fowl, but something between the two. His dramas were like a weak chin. If he did not see eye to eye with the classicists neither did he sympathize with Dumas. And neither could Charles X, when he bethought himself, sympathize with the Romantics. As the new school talked louder and louder and developed into young fire-eaters the King took alarm. The increasing liberality of printed matter aroused him to action and he began to take those steps in the suppression of free speech which were to result in his downfall within a year. Béranger was already in prison. The *Corsaire* and its editor, M. Vremiot, were prosecuted in the Police Court for an article called *Sottise des deux parts* and convicted. Fontan, a talented young journalist, was incarcerated for an article entitled *Mouton enragé,* and Barthelemy, a clever writer of light verse, was indicted for a poem called *Fils de l'homme.* Politics and the Romantic movement became mixed, for the journalists fought for freedom of political expression and the romantics for freedom of dramatic structure. Dumas talked much without thinking a great deal, permitted Hugo and de Vigny to do his cogitation for him, and became the d'Artagnan of the movement. Hugo was the Athos and de Vigny the Aramis. Gautier was to be the Porthos. The night of the première of *Henri III et sa Cour* Hugo had seized Dumas by the hand and exclaimed, "It is my turn now." Dumas waited confidently for the revelation.

Thoughts of his *Christine* crept back into Dumas's mind. A charming young actress, possibly Virginie Bourbier, had reproached him because there was no part for her in the unproduced play, and Dumas, the eternal gallant, had promised to rectify the omission. The idea suddenly occurred to him that he could think better while traveling and therefore he mounted a diligence in the Cours de Messageries one morning and settled himself for the twenty hours' journey over a rough road to Havre. The diligence rumbled along the highway and Dumas, seated in the *coupé,* and huddled up in his great coat, scowled, flashed brief glances at the landscape, jotted down odd notes

on a bit of paper, and now and then knocked his forehead furiously with his knuckles. By the time the heavy coach rumbled into the sea-port he had completed his revision, a revision, it may be said, owing much to the previous suggestions of the astute actor, Samson, who had advised him at the second reading. At Havre Dumas ate oysters, saw the sea for the first time, sailed about the harbor, bought a couple of china vases which he could have purchased more cheaply in Paris, and started back to the capital. Seventy-two hours after he had left it he was again in the whirl of Paris. *Christine* was reconstructed and all he had to do was to set it down on paper. At his apartment he found a note from Victor Hugo inviting him to Achille Déveria's house for the first reading of *Marion Delorme,* which, at that time, was called *Un duel sous Richelieu.* Hugo had written this play in twenty-six days.

Achille Déveria's studio contained the future of France. Dumas, entering late and flinging his cloak over a chair, glanced about him and saw the plump pouter pigeon Honoré de Balzac, who detested him; the aristocratic and friendly face of Alfred de Vigny, whose *Othello* was progressing so well; the worried countenance of Baron Taylor, who was still threatening to fly from authors and bury himself in the sands of the Sahara; the bustling restlessness of Sainte-Beuve, arranging as always a comfortable chair for Victor; the stubborn expression of Frédéric Soulié, whom Dumas had not seen since their altercation over *Christine*; the languid attitude of Alfred de Musset, who lolled like a wilted lily; Prosper Mérimée who seemed to walk through life with a mask; the icy aloofness of Eugéne Delacroix; the laughing boisterousness of Louis Boulanger; Alexandre Soumet; Émile and Antony Deschamps; Charles Magnin; Eugène Déveria, brother to Achille; Armand and Édouard Bertin; Villemain; Alcide de Beauchesne; and Madame Amable Tastu. This gathering was more than the Pléiade, more than the Cénacle; it was the firmament of France. And by the table in the corner, spreading his manuscript before him, was the youthful Sun-God—Victor Hugo. Dumas sat down near the buffet of refreshments and composed himself for the first reading of *Un duel sous Richelieu.*

What did these men who were diverting the stream of French

letters from its narrow channel into a wide and rushing river that forked about islands and ran both deep and shallow think about the author of *Henri III et sa Cour*? Did they accept him as an equal, as a creator to be placed beside Hugo and de Vigny? They did nothing of the sort. There was always gentle contempt or smiling benevolence or a slight bending in their attitude toward Dumas. The young man attracted and repelled them. His vivacity, his gusto, his frank friendliness, his spendthrift generosity, his absolute lack of jealousy and spleen, his dramatic astuteness and swashbuckling mannerisms attracted them; but his overweening vanity, his lack of profundity, his dependence on other writers and other books, his vulgarities in taste and costume, his negroid qualities repelled them. He was *nouveau riche* in literature, a *pauvret* of genius. *Henri III et sa Cour* had been a success of assimilation. Balzac frankly detested Dumas. He saw as little of him as he could, and once when they met at some gathering remarked as he passed the tall young playwright, "When I can do nothing else I shall take to writing plays." "Begin at once, then," retorted Dumas. Sainte-Beuve, though he tried to be fair, possessed no particular love for Dumas, a coldness that may be explained, perhaps, by the critic's ardent discipleship of Hugo. As for Victor, he was both jealous and deceptive in his attitude. He professed friendship and accepted the laudation of Dumas and yet tacitly approved such unfair proceedings as the Cassagnac attack. Sudden success and elevation had brought to the surface of Dumas a naïve and flamboyant vanity that was far from the silent pride great artists take in their triumphs. He loved the plaudits of the crowd, enjoyed occupying a prominent place in the public eye; if his name was not in the papers he was disconsolate. He dramatized himself unceasingly and vulgarly and this irritated those other writers who were also anxious for public acclaim but more sly and restrained in their eagerness. Victor Hugo, who posed as a Jupiter armed with thunderbolts, was the demi-god of the younger men and they resented any infringement upon his divine status. He was the young Titan, the Hercules of letters who balanced *Notre Dame de Paris* in the palm of one hand and *Cromwell* in the other. His vast pomposity was taken for godhead; his profound assurance was the mantle of divine sovereignty.

In the face of this jealous antagonism—mute enough at first but manifesting itself in odd ways—Dumas preserved his child-like faith in humanity and his affection for those who injured him. His attitude toward Hugo was admirable. He adored Hugo and believed in him as a great artist and prophet of the new era and he never failed to express this belief, not even after he knew that Hugo was indirectly attacking him. What did it matter after all? It was the work that counted, not the man. And so, seated in Achille Déveria's studio he attended the reading of *Un duel sous Richelieu* with an enthusiasm unmistakable in its sincerity. He considered the first act a masterpiece, although as he listened to it a feeling of sadness swept over him. He recollected how lacking in style he was, how far behind Hugo's best works his own poetical efforts lagged, and he sighed softly. If he could turn phrases so neatly and beautifully! Yet when the reading terminated he leaped up in excitement and with shouts of joy. Alternately extolling the play and cramming his mouth with refreshments from the buffet he gave a fervid representation of the delirious disciple.

He followed with the closest attention and warmest assistance the progress of *Marion Delorme*—the title having been changed from *Un duel sous Richelieu*. Harel of the Odéon made a bid for it. So did Crosnier of the Porte-Saint-Martin. Hugo gave it to Taylor at the Théâtre-Français and it was placed in rehearsal almost immediately. But the way of *Marion Delorme* was not to be as easy as that. The heavy fist of the Censor descended upon it, and it was interdicted because of the rôle that Louis XIII played in it. Hugo appealed to M. de Martignac who had been so generous about *Henri III et sa Cour,* but M. de Martignac was powerless. It was not the question of a Valois character here; a Bourbon, an ancestor of Charles X was involved; M. de Martignac could do nothing but cough nervously and indicate that the last court of appeal was the King. Hugo promptly turned to Charles X himself and on August 7, 1829 (perhaps due to the kindly aid of Madame du Cayla), obtained an audience at Saint-Cloud with the old man of the Bourbon nose and the drooping underlip. This meeting resulted in nothing but a confirmation of the interdiction, and, as a compensating sop to the aggrieved young dramatist, the raising of Hugo's government pension from two thou-

sand tc four thousand francs annually. But Hugo was not to be bought. He proudly refused the augmentation. The Romantics were discouraged for they had considered *Marion Delorme* the crucial stroke to follow up *Henri III et sa Cour*. Dumas, taking his color from his comrades and properly infuriated, was inspired to indite a poem to Hugo which began:

*Ils ont dit: "L'oeuvre du génie*
*Est au monde un flambeau qui luit,*
*Que sa lumière soit bannie*
*Et tout rentrera dans la nuit."*
*Puis de leurs haleines funèbres*
*Ils ont épaissi les ténèbres;*
*Mais tout effort est impuissant*
*Contre la flamme vacillante*
*Que Dieu mit, légère et brillante,*
*Au front du poëte en naissant.*

A rare folio of Ronsard's verse was presented to Hugo by Sainte-Beuve and on its wide margins were poetical testimonials from Lamartine, Alfred de Vigny, Madame Amable Tastu, Ulric Guttinguer, Ernest Fouinet, Louis Boulanger, Jules Janin and Fonteney. The young Sun-God withdrew himself into the shadows and set to work upon *Hernani*.

The breach left by the interdiction of *Marion Delorme* was filled by the production of Alfred de Vigny's translation of Shakespeare's *Othello* on October 24, 1829. This drama, called in French *Le More de Venise,* created another breach, however,—between de Vigny and Hugo. Had Hugo not said after the première of *Henri III et sa Cour* "It is my turn now?" The young pontiff of romanticism resented the obtrusion of de Vigny into the foremost of the battle, the diversion from him of the bright spotlight of public interest, and he revealed his resentment in an unmistakable manner. By a furious and sustained endeavor he had delivered *Hernani* to the Théâtre-Français on October 1, the extreme speed obviously being due to his desire to strike the decisive blow against the traditionalists. And now de Vigny had slipped in ahead of him. Hugo's rancor, however,

was uncalled for. De Vigny's *Othello,* although it aroused excitement and Joanny's performance of the Moor thrilled a mixed audience, was no more than a holding of the line already established by *Henri III et sa Cour.* After all, *Othello* was a borrowed play. Dumas, seated far front in the theater, was one of the loudest and most vociferous of the enthusiasts. He had discovered the delight of being obnoxious and noisy in the theater. To stand up and wave a cane, to bellow ferociously at booing and hissing traditionalists, to roar like a lion his approval of romantic manifestations, these things resulted in reprimands in the daily press and reprimands meant his name in print.

During this period of noisy propaganda against Boileau's dictums, Dumas was negotiating over *Christine.* Frédéric Soulié's play on the same subject had failed dismally at the Odéon and the Théâtre-Français was begging Dumas to submit his script for another reading. But Dumas was tired of the compromising and dilatory tactics of the national house of drama. He refused the invitation for another reading and pointed out that such a proceeding would be a third reading in reality and, therefore, undignified. He turned his back on the stony faces of Racine and Corneille and addressed his attention to an amazing letter which Harel of the Odéon had despatched to him. It ran:

> My dear Dumas,—What do you think of this idea of Mademoiselle Georges? To play your *Christine* immediately, on the same stage and with the same actors as those who played Soulié's *Christine?* The conditions to be settled by yourself. You need not trouble your head with the idea that you will strangle a friend's work, because it yesterday died a natural death.—Yours ever, Harel.

What a scoundrel! Poor Soulié! Dumas was tempted to throw the note away and then, reconsidering the temptation, scribbled a line across it and forwarded it to Soulié. At least he would show Soulié that he was innocent of any connivance detrimental to the saw-mill owner and playwright. His scribbled line read:

> My dear Frédéric,—Read this letter. What a rascal your friend Harel is!—Yours, Alex. Dumas.

Soulié replied promptly:

My dear Dumas,—Harel is not my friend, he is a manager. Harel is not a rascal, only a speculator. I would not do what he is doing but I would advise him to do so. Gather up the fragments of my *Christine*—and I warn you there are plenty of them—throw them into the basket of the first rag-and-bone man that passes your way and get your own piece played.—Yours ever, F. Soulié.

Well . . . if Soulié felt that way. Dumas walked past the Théâtre-Français with a sardonic smile on his face.

*Christine* was read—and read once only—to the assembled Odéon players, both Jules Janin and Sainte-Beuve being present—possibly as unofficial observers of the romantic army. Mademoiselle Georges lifted her beautiful white arms and approved the title-part. Janin looked at Sainte-Beuve and Sainte-Beuve looked at Janin. Then both of them shook their heads. It was only Victor Hugo, the Sun-God, who could . . . That evening Harel made a nervous appearance at Dumas's apartment, and, after admiring the young man's new purple gilet, hesitatingly suggested that *Christine*—which was wholly written in verse—be turned into prose. An easy enough matter. After all . . . Dumas rose to his long legs, stalked to the door, opened it, and suggested that the night air might prove beneficial to Harel. Harel passed out disconsolately. He still insisted that it was a beautiful purple gilet.

In the rue Notre Dame des Champs the young Sun-God who had labored so furiously and against time on *Hernani* glanced at the line inscribed on the sheet of paper before him, looked up, and smiled. It ran:

*Vous êtes mon lion superbe et généreux!*

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## THE GUNS OF REVOLUTION

### I

His Majesty Charles X paused long enough from his preparations for the Algerian campaign to instigate a tightening of the Censorship. The young Romantics, it seemed to him and M. de Polignac, were altogether too free in their treatment of royalty. After all, kings were not cruel puppets and neither were queens meretricious dolls. It was for this reason that *Marion Delorme* had been interdicted. The daring supposition that any youthful writer might sit in his attic (or wherever writers sat when they labored—Charles X was not quite sure) and hold up to ridicule rulers anointed by God and inject sly Republican sentiments into his plays was too painful for the flower of the Elder Branch to contemplate. He now had the Polignac ministry to aid and abet him in his schemes of suppression and the iron hand of the Bourbon began to manifest itself more rigorously than ever. Charles X was too old to peer through the mists of throbbing Paris and see the blood-stained specter of the Three Days in the immediate distance. Dumas, excoriating the Censorship in his extravagant way, sudddenly experienced the full weight of the iron hand. *Christine* was stopped. The excited young man bustled off to M. Briffaut, the author of a dreary *Ninus II,* and learned that his drama simply bristled with political innuendoes. In fact, there were so many of them that the bewildered Censor—in this case M. Briffaut—did not know where to start expurgating the unhappy allusions. What a terrible line, for instance, was:

*C'est un hochet royal trouvé dans mon berceau!*

Why, that line attacked legitimacy, the divine right, and the succes-

sion! M. Briffaut shuddered with horror at the thought. Dumas, almost convinced that he was going mad, listened to M. Briffaut and could make no rejoinder. "And the situation in which the crown is sent to Cromwell," continued the sub-Censor, "that is a very dangerous suggestion for the Monarchy." Dumas protested that the situation was an historical fact. M. Briffaut shook his head. The decapitation of Louis XVI was also an historical fact but it would hardly serve for the Théâtre-Français. No, there were historical facts *and* historical facts. Dumas left M. Briffaut wondering just what difference there was between kings and ostriches.

Harel, impatient to proceed with *Christine,* urged the young man to approach the head of the Censorial staff, M. de Lourdoueix. He slyly suggested that Dumas secure that august individual's patronage through a noted lady whose favors gladdened the evenings of M. de Lourdoueix. The young man scorned the silken barricade of petticoats, and, like Raoul in *Les Huguenots,* full of confidence in the justice of his cause, marched off boldly to the south side of Paris to beard the Chief Censor in his den. M. de Lourdoueix refused to be bearded and remarked somewhat testily: "It is no use for you to say anything at all. As long as the Elder Branch is on the throne and I act as Censor your work will be suspended." Dumas lost his temper. "I shall wait, then!" he retorted in a significant manner, his voice full of exploding musketry and crashing barricades. M. de Lourdoueix bowed ironically and remarked: "That decision had been already arrived at." It was a good retort, so good that all Dumas could do (and he never failed to have the last word if it were possible) was to bawl through the closing door: "Then I repeat it!" He strode away growling to himself, fiery Republican sentiments springing up like armed men in his mind. It was time for the removal of all Kings. The head of Charles X would look fine on one of the iron pickets before the Théâtre-Français. Curse the Polignac ministry! Curse M. de Lourdoueix! Curse . . . Suddenly he stopped in the middle of the boulevard and said aloud: "A man who, when discovered by his mistress's husband, kills her—swearing that she had offered resistance to his addresses, and dying on the scaffold for the murder—saves the wife's honor and expiates his crime." *Elle me résistait, je l'ai assassiné!* The passersby, observing the tall young man in the fanciful gilet

festooned with gold chains mumbling to himself, gave him a wide berth. He might be one of the madmen of Paris, *he who was Gannot,* for instance, or Caillaux the prophet. Dumas paid no attention to the startled glances of the pedestrians. He had found the theme of *Antony.*

Where had it come from? Out of the air? Out of M. Briffaut's wrinkled forehead? Out of M. de Lourdoueix's sour expression? It had come out of his own life. These words spoken aloud in the boulevard were merely the verbal recognition of the suddenly discovered imaginary climax to the emotional storm through which he had passed so recently. Things happened like that to the born writer. An unexpected flash in the brain and everything was clear. It was his love affair with Mélanie Waldor that he would fashion into a drama. The new play would be in prose. It would be swift and fiery—as his ardor for Mélanie had been; it would be Satanic and thrilling—as he had seemed to Mélanie; it would be sensational and modern—as the feverish affair had progressed. That was it—modern. No more armor and doublets and dead queens and *"hochets royaux"* and dangerous political allusions. As he hastened toward his apartment he considered the varying facets of his liaison with Mélanie. There had been his frantic wooing, the discreet little room in which she had given herself to him, his melodramatic assumption of a Satanic rôle, his fear of Captain Waldor (had he not hurried three times to acquaintances in the War Office and maneuvered postponements of the Captain's leave of absence from the dull country garrison?), and his actual jealousy—an agony that had eventually dwindled to an insincere simulation. He adored Mélanie no longer. Three years had sufficed to lessen, still, and eventually slaughter the affection which had sprung to so fiery a life in M. Villenave's drawing room. The dark thin woman who had reposed so quietly beneath the painting of Anne Boleyn and beside the urn that once contained the heart of Bayard was no longer a mysterious and desirable personality but a jealous and possessive creature uneven in temper and suffering from dyspepsia. Their assignations—once so illicitly sweet—had degenerated into a series of reproaches on her side and an ineffectual mummery of the aspect of love on his. Virginie Bourbier, Mademoiselle Mars, Louise Despréaux, these were the names she continually flung at him. He knew he was

unfaithful, that he was incapable of fidelity; still, the demon of self-dramatization awakened an injured soul within him. Mélanie did not understand him. The infidelities of the artist were the weapons of creation. Well, he would make a play of it all. Mélanie should be Adèle (he might as well use the name of his first sweetheart) and he would be . . . would be Antony. Antony who had flung the world away for the love of Cleopatra. And Antony would be something like Didier in Victor Hugo's *Marion Delorme.* Romantic, Satanic, mad. *"Demandez à un cadavre combien de fois il a vécu!"* The figures of the play slowly emerged into a phantom life in his mind. When he reached his apartment in the rue de l'Université he had conceived the shadowy scaffolding of a play.

Dumas wrote *Antony* in six weeks and into that drama he flung an intensity and melodramatic substance that was astonishing for the period. The play had the singleness of an obsessing situation. He read it before the assembled company of the Théâtre-Français where it was received rather coldly but accepted nevertheless. The mimes could not understand a modern play in which the characters dressed in contemporary garments. It recalled to them rather unpleasantly such tawdry (but overwhelmingly popular) boulevard melodramas as *Trente Ans, ou la Vie d'un Joueur;* and productions of this type—as far from Racine as the North Pole is from the South Pole—seemed to some of them profanations of the House of Molière. Still Mademoiselle Mars and Firmin—not without misgivings—received the leading rôles and a call was issued for immediate rehearsals. Both the directorate of the Théâtre-Français and Dumas had failed to take into account the Censor. M. de Lourdoueix received his copy of the script, read it, and hastily issued a notice of indefinite suspension. Dumas was beside himself. Two plays suppressed in succession! Did it mean that he was to be permitted no more productions while Charles X reigned in the Tuileries? The angry words of M. de Lourdoueix echoed ominously in his ears: "As long as the Elder Branch is on the throne and I act as Censor your work will be suspended." Then come quickly, come quickly, Revolution! The young man became more republican than ever and the cafés echoed to his wordy eloquence. Happily for him, however, other influences were at work, among them "that rascal" Harel who possessed powerful friends close to the

Censorship and Madame du Cayla, close to the throne, who considered Dumas a rather fascinating young man, and in March *Christine* was returned to the Odéon theater with very few changes and released for production. Even the *"hochet royal"* remained undisturbed. Rehearsals started immediately with Mademoiselle Georges as Queen Christine, Lockroy as Monaldeschi, Ligier as Sentinelli, and Mademoiselle Noblet as Paula.

*Antony* continued to repose under the black cloud of the Censorship.

At one o'clock on the afternoon on February 25, 1830, a mob of young men gathered at the rue de Valois door of the Théâtre-Français and pushed through into the unlighted auditorium. The passersby stopped in amazement to view this concourse of outlandish figures, and small urchins hastened to the nearest piles of débris in the gutters for ammunition. The opportunity for offensive battle was too much for them. This gesticulating crowd of young men was garmented in a bewildering array of unusual costumes. Immense Spanish capes. Fantastic gilets of barbaric hues. Coats *à la* Robespierre. Henri III caps. Southern costumes from Provence and the Basque country. Turkish, Greek and Bedouin robes. The street arabs seized their cannon-balls of débris and let fly at them. Loud curses. Threatening canes. Clenched fists. The streets arabs redoubled their attack to roars of laughter from the loitering pedestrians. The astonishing figures disappeared as rapidly as possible into the gloomy maw of the Théâtre-Français. Once inside they spread over the seats, securing points of vantage, settling down to their long wait for the evening performance, depositing beside them their bundles of cervelas, ham and bread and their tall bottles of red wine. They composed the first division of the Romantic Army called into existence by Victor Hugo and assembled as his *claque* for the opening night of *Hernani.* A literary Waterloo was to be fought.

The interdiction of *Marion Delorme,* the limited success of Alfred de Vigny's *Le More de Venise,* the querulous antagonism of the traditionalists, and, perhaps, the nearing glow of the approaching July Days, had created a strangely taut situation. *Hernani* was more than a play; it was a cause. By it rose or fell the youthful standard of the Romantic School. The young men of Paris knew this and so did the

traditionalists. Hugo knew it, also. He knew that he could not trust the professional *claque*—that regardless army of mercenaries, that he did not command enough money to swing it wholeheartedly into his camp. Therefore he devised a *claque* of his own. From the ateliers, high rooms on the Left Bank, cafés, and gathering-places of the young writers and painters he recruited volunteers, assembling them as a general assembles his troops, indicating leaders, and forming well-defined commands. These commands were led by trusted captains, by Louis Boulanger, Emile Deschamps. Charles Nodier, Achille Devéria, Gérard de Nerval, and a dozen others. Slips of red paper with the Spanish word "hierro" (iron) printed upon them were distributed to the warriors as a means of identification. From one o'clock on Jeune-France poured into the murkiness of the Théâtre-Français, bent on securing the best seats before the traditionalists appeared, joking among themselves, roaring out popular *chansons,* shouting for the sheer pleasure of shouting, hurling defiances at the stony and unperturbed faces of Racine and Corneille, gobbling ham and cheese, drinking from tall bottles, bestrewing the auditorium with the débris of their hasty dinners.

As the various leaders swaggered in followed by their noisy soldiers bellows of welcome heralded them. Ernest de Saxe-Coburg, forgetting that he was royal, took his place in the front of the balcony as the chandeliers were lighted and a soft glow illuminated the house. Honoré de Balzac, his broad face still stained by the cabbage-head some *gamin* had flung at him with accurate aim, pushed his way toward a seat in the pit. Dumas, among the earliest to arrive, bayed with joy as the strange figures of the Romantics, garmented in costumes indicating their complete break with the old conservative tradition, appeared in the doorway. There was Celestin Nanteuil, a perfect type of Jeune-France with his long blond hair floating behind him, the soutane-like redingote buttoned to his chin, with an air *"insexué,"* seating himself beside Jehan du Seigneur, who had adapted his name to the age of Villon. From a loge the pale beauty of Delphine Gay glimmered through the artificial light. Petrus Borel, his great beard sweeping his chest, stood up and bayed like a wolf. Auguste de Chatillon, Edouard Thierry, and Amédée Pommier, capes sweeping behind them, roared the popular *chansons* of the day as

they paraded down the aisle. Joseph Bouchardy, in a blue habit with silver buttons and an *"air oriental,"* and Philotée O'Neddy, he of the marvellous name, marshalled their forces of *"brigands de la pensée"* like Napoleonic commanders. Augustus MacKeat, unknown to Dumas as yet but within ten years to be his generalissimo of collaborators under the name of Maquet, slipped on an empty wine bottle as he pushed his way toward a seat. A tremendous roar shook the chandeliers as young Théophile Gautier, clad in a rose-colored waistcoat and silver-grey pantaloons striped with black velvet, appeared at the door. He was the walking oriflamme of Jeune-France. Twilight deepened into the wintry darkness of evening and the traditionalists began to percolate through the house, haughty academicians and austere disciples of Lemercier and Arnault. They secured their places, murmuring heatedly to one another about the remnants of cervelas, the bits of greasy paper, and the empty bottles that littered the floor about them. Behind the curtain the temperamental Mademoiselle Mars exclaimed angrily to Victor Hugo: *"J'ai joué devant bien des publics, mais je vous devrai d'avoir joué devant celui-là!"* Outside the bitter cold of a ferocious winter swept the streets and a howling wind rushed across the frozen Seine; inside there was color—and what extravagant color!—movement—and what reckless and quivering movement!—warmth—and what a furnace of leashed emotions! The Théâtre-Français, that Bastille of classicism, had been transformed to a rocking chaos of excitement.

The turmoil did not cease when the curtain rose and the frightened actors appeared upon the stage. Protestations rose from the loges and orchestra chairs only to be abruptly silenced from the embattled parterre. At the famous scene of the portraits a tempest broke loose, insults were hurled back and forth, and the play was halted for ten minutes until the bedlam of conflicting voices simmered down to comparative silence. *Hernani* struggled along like a pitching vessel riding an angry sea. Throughout the constantly interrupted progress of the drama the battle continued, romanticists roaring their approval and classicists shrilling their hatred and disapproval at one another. This seething cauldron of a playhouse became a witches' monstrous kettle from which arose (as the eight kings rose from the cauldron before Macbeth) the ominous figure of Romanticism armed cap-a-pie,

visor lowered and mailed gauntlet extended. Before this undisciplined audience Mademoiselle Mars, recovering the histrionic strength that had lifted her so high in former years, portrayed—during the last acts—so extraordinary a simulation of youth and beauty that even a portion of the traditionalist army was silenced by her genius. When the final curtain fell the young Romanticists noisily proclaimed their victory. MM. Lemercier, de Jouy, Viennet, Baour-Lormain and Arnault were buried in the deep grave of a lost and outmoded cause. *"Cette date,"* wrote Théophile Gautier years later of February 25, 1830, *"reste écrite dans le fond de notre passé en caractères flamboyants. . . . Cette soirée décida de notre vie!"* But victory did not come as easily as this. For forty-five nights the extraordinary struggle continued, Hugo filling a hundred seats with his disciples at each performance. There were always interruptions and quarrels and sometimes there were manifestations as furious as those that took place at the première. Between one of the acts of the thirtieth representation Mademoiselle Mars and Hugo searched the script for those lucky lines that had not been hissed. They could not find one. Dumas, lost, but not silent in the mob of Romanticists on the opening night, must have thought—not without pride—of the first production of *Henri III et sa Cour.* That had been his triumph, a triumph that had prepared the way for *Hernani,* and, perhaps, hastened the disputed victory of the Romantics. They had forgotten that. But *Christine* and *Antony* would remind them again.

An unexpected voice came from the sawmill at La Gare. Frédéric Soulié, breaking his somewhat sullen silence, applied to Dumas for a pass to the general rehearsal of *Christine.* The young man, delighted at this evidence of a *rapprochement* with his stubborn old friend, lost no time in despatching the desired ticket. He had missed Soulié, his arguments, his bluff honesty, and his seasoned advice, although, in some ways he had outgrown his semi-discipleship to the older man. The circumstances that occasioned the rift between the two playwrights had been simple enough—both desired to write the same play. Soulié, a trifle contemptuous of the younger man, had underestimated Dumas's ability and told him to go ahead with it. Both *had* written the same play. Soulié's drama failed lamentably after eight gloomy

performances to empty seats, and here—matter enough to lacerate any sensitive writer's pride—was Dumas's *Christine* about to be produced on the same stage and with the same actors that had taken part in Soulié's *débâcle*. Hurt though he was, Soulié, unlike Achilles, refused to sulk too long in his tent. Troy was being besieged and the playwright-sawmill-manager sniffed the battle from afar. It was necessary for him to be upon the field. *Hernani* still hung in the balance. The ateliers and cafés of Paris were echoing to threats and Gargantuan vaunts. Dumas was fighting on the field with Hugo and de Vigny and a dozen others. Soulié pocketed his pride, tacitly admitted his mistaken judgment of the younger man, and emerged from the shadows. He observed the general rehearsal of *Christine,* noted what vaster opportunities Dumas had given Mademoiselle Georges and Ligier, and admitted, with a steadily mounting enthusiasm, what wonders Dumas had accomplished with the common theme. At the conclusion of the fifth act Dumas went somewhat timidly to pay his respects to Soulié. The unsuccessful dramatist stood up and held his arms out for the young man and Dumas embraced him with a deep affection. The unfortunate months of estrangement were at an end.

"Have you fifty places left in the pit?" Soulié asked.

Dumas nodded.

"Give them to me," answered Soulié. "I will send my workmen from the sawmill and their horny palms will furnish you a *claque* that you will not forget for a long time."

*Christine* was produced on March 30, 1830, to the mingled protests of a well organized antagonistic *claque* and the approving uproar of Soulié's workmen. For seven hours the fate of the drama was in doubt. Dumas, seated in a stage box, observed the inconsistent incidents of this struggle, saw his play knocked down a dozen times, and witnessed its final triumphant conclusion to the plaudits of an exhausted and horrified audience. Premières in 1830 were pitched battles. The young man realized as he watched and listened that *Christine,* in spite of its virtues, was a ragged and imperfect play, that immediate alterations were necessary, and that the unflawed victory of *Henri III et sa Cour* was not to be repeated with this second production. The fifth act, in which the wounded and bleeding Monaldeschi

drags himself across the stage to the feet of the Queen and begs for mercy only to hear her cold: *"Eh bien, j'en ai pitié, mon père.—Qu'on l'achève!"* progressed perfectly and aroused a shuddering audience and recalled to Dumas the triumph of the third act of *Henri III et sa Cour,* but the epilogue defeated this climax. It would have to be shorn away. That night Dumas gave a late supper (it was practically an early breakfast) to a group of his friends, Hugo, de Vigny, Paul Lacroix, Louis Boulanger, Achille Comte, Planche, Théodore Villenave and Cordelier-Delanoue. Hugo and de Vigny were meeting in friendly intercourse for the first time since de Vigny's *Othello* had slipped into the Théâtre-Français ahead of *Hernani.* The exhausted Dumas, wearied to death by the struggle that had occupied the Odéon stage for seven hours, was incapable of doing anything except sit limply in his chair. The young men laughed, drank, and sang. Romantic toasts emptied bottle after bottle. Dumas sagged in his chair, his enormous vitality quiescent for once. Victor Hugo and de Vigny, observing him, slyly removed themselves from the chamber of festivities and locked a door between them and the laughter. When Dumas woke in the morning, his friends gone and the cold débris of a festival littering the rooms, he observed the manuscript of *Christine* perched prominently upon the mantle. He crawled out of bed slothfully and picked up the play with a sigh. There were so many changes to be made, more than a hundred verses to be rewritten, and a rehearsal had been called for noon. How would he ever adjust his exhausted mind to it? He turned over two or three pages of the manuscript and put it down in amazement. Then he picked it up again and ran through it. All the changes had been made. While the others laughed and drank Hugo and de Vigny had worked for four hours in the locked room whipping *Christine* into shape. It was in this way that the Romantics fought before the venomous little rifts of jealousy parted them.

Dumas opened his door to the midday sunlight and to Barba, the bookseller, who sat on the step waiting to offer the young dramatist twelve thousand francs for the manuscript of *Christine.*

Women continued to complicate the life of Dumas. He was incapable of resisting their charms for his polygamous instincts destroyed

his theoretical concept of fidelity. Marie-Catherine, safely installed in Passy, was forgotten, or, if brought to mind, recollected with an effort. Mélanie continued to struggle lachrymosely for her lost ascendency, but Dumas, having completed *Antony,* needed her no longer. Mademoiselle Mars, though more than fifty years of age, experienced moments of tenderness for the ungovernable young man. Mademoiselle Georges sat complacently in her bathtub and lifted her white arms to the gold pins in her hair, revealing, by this slow gesture, the lovely contours of her body, while Dumas and other male friends loitered about the room and envied Napoleon. Virginie Bourbier and Louise Despréaux had vanished for they were no more than brief interludes in an existence tuned to the eternal music of many women's voices. Not all of Dumas's friendships with women were intimate. He possessed his Platonic relationships as well. Amaury Duval's sister, Madame Chasseriau—who lived in one of the apartments in the Institute—was one of these cool and charming creatures who kept the young man at arm's length, smiled at his volatile temperament, and restrained his ardent nature. Marie Nodier was another. Still another was Delphine Gay, the Muse Delphine, once the sweetheart of Alfred de Vigny and soon to be Madame de Girardin. With these women who laughingly guarded themselves against his ingenuous approaches Dumas could discuss life and letters. At the same time he was forever seeking the new face and the melting eyes that would respond to his excessive need of *l'amour.* One woman unsought and unsuspected entered his life by way of a cab at one o'clock in the morning.

It was the evening of the second performance of *Christine.* After the fall of the curtain Dumas left the brilliantly lighted portal of the Odéon, pushed his way through the congregated carriages, waved aside the acquaintances who hailed him, and started on foot across the darkness of the Place de l'Odéon. He had not travelled far when a closed cab drew up beside him and a woman's head protruded from the door. A sweet voice inquired: "Are you Monsieur Dumas?" The young man admitted the fact. "Very well," continued the voice as a white hand opened the door of the cab. "Come inside and kiss me." Dumas climbed into the cab with alacrity and found himself *tête-à-tête* with Madame Dorval of the Porte-Saint-Martin Théâtre, a talented young actress of popular rôles whose complaisance was only exceeded

by her charm. "You possess marvellous talent, and you don't draw women badly, either!" breathed Madame Dorval. Dumas did not deny it. A few weeks after this rencontre Madame Duval was referring to Dumas as her "big bow-wow." The dramatist was often at her home and the charming Dorval was to be discovered frequently enough in Dumas's apartment stretched out on the divan like a luxurious kitten and listening lazily to the conversation of the assembled Romantics. It was there that Alfred de Vigny first saw her and was instantly fascinated. Dumas saw the glow in the eyes of the ex-officer and smiling gayly gazed elsewhere.

At Firmin's house one evening he stared directly into two large blue eyes. The charming stranger possessed jet black hair, a nose as straight as that of the Venus de Milo and teeth like pearls. She had been playing the "Mars parts" in the provinces and Firmin, who had been on tour in *Henri III et sa Cour,* immediately induced her to return to Paris with him. Firmin's interest in Bell Krebsamer was theoretical, so to speak, so Dumas, without further thoughts of Mélanie, Mademoiselle Georges, Madame Dorval, or anyone else, plunged into an amorous siege that lasted exactly as long as the siege of the Duc d'Orléans before Anvers—three weeks. At the termination of that gentle warfare Mélanie S. (as Dumas always referred to Bell Krebsamer) was installed in number seven, rue de l'Université, a few doors from her lover's apartment. Mélanie S. undoubtedly expected a means of progression theatrically in this liaison and determined to profit by it. Mélanie Waldor was now definitely succeeded although the frayed and cruel ends of that affair were yet to be properly tied together by Dumas. The young man was never quite honest about these matters. He was always on with the new love before he was off with the old.

History began to divert Dumas's insouciant existence into revolutionary channels. On May 31, 1830, he was invited (as an afterthought by the son of the Duc d'Orléans—the Duc de Chartres) to an impressive ball at the Palais-Royal where François, King of Naples (son of that Ferdinand whom Dumas accused of poisoning his father in the prisons of Brindisi), and Charles X appeared in all their royal plumes and feathers. Dumas entered the hall just before the French King

arrived and was both vexed and humiliated when the Duc d'Orléans walked up to him and whispered: "If, by chance, the King honors you by speaking to you, you know that you must address him neither as *Sire* nor *Majesté* but simply as *le Roi*." As though he didn't know court etiquette! Dumas was still scowling to himself when the drums beat and Charles X and his retinue entered the Palais-Royal. The young man saw a tall and thin old gentleman with beautiful white hair and an ugly underlip that drooped on his chin. M. de Salvandy, who was present, concocted a *mot* that spread throughout Paris the next day. He whispered to the Duc d'Orléans: "Monseigneur, this is a true Neapolitan fête, for we are dancing upon the edge of a volcano." The Duc's enigmatical expression never changed. He was, perhaps, wondering slyly to himself how far the divertissement of the Algerian campaign would remove Charles X from the imminent crisis of his reign. It was a spectacular red herring, to be sure, but would it shift the rancor of the disaffected young Republicans from the Tuileries?

Dumas left the ball with a distinct grievance against the Duc d'Orléans and an increased Republican fervor.

On the fourteenth of June the French army debarked on the coast of Algeria. A swift campaign followed. The battle of Staoueli was fought on the nineteenth and Fort-de-l'Empereur was taken on the fourth of July. Official announcement of the investment of Algiers was published in the Parisian journals of July ninth. The divertissement produced no amelioration of the unrest in the capital and the short-sighted Polignac ministry, guided by the King, turned to the fatal ordinances.

Dumas suddenly decided that he would travel to Algiers, bask for a while on the warm shores of the Mediterranean, and study the resources of the newly-acquired territories, the faint specter, perhaps, of his future *Impressions de Voyage* rising in his industrious and restless mind. He would take Mélanie S. with him, of course. Indeed, it is possible that this proposed journey occurred to the young man as one method of decisively destroying the few links that still held him to Mélanie Waldor. It was not that he desired to run away but that he had sucked all the emotional stimulus he could from the old affair and did not feel equal to the commonplaces of a last and definite verbal understanding. It was much more romantic to sail to Algiers

where there were black men, Mohammedans with fezes, sheiks in burnouses, and mysterious women with veiled faces. With this "Arabian Nights" picture in mind he started to turn his francs into gold and purchase clothing for the trip.

Charles X and his government were to intervene, however. The ordinances were inscribed on paper, ordinances suppressing certain of the Liberal newspapers that continued to attack the ministry, dissolving the recently elected Chamber of Deputies before its first meeting, and approving a diminution of the electorate. This was tyranny and young men such as Cavaignac, Arago and others bestirred themselves. For a brief while it was thought that Charles X would not dare sign his own death warrant. Could not the blind old man, scrupulous as he was from his own royal angle, see that the minute he appended his signature to the ordinances he had flung his Kingdom away for a principle that had ceased to exist? Paris seethed and waited. The twenty-fifth of July fell on a Sunday and Charles X, who was installed in his palace at Saint-Cloud, attended mass calmly, and, afterward, opened the momentous meeting of the Counsel. The text of the ordinances was read slowly and carefully to the King. He listened, his ugly lower lip resting on his chin, and then, picking up the pen, he turned to the assembled ministers and remarked: "I am more than ever convinced, messieurs, that it is impossible to do anything else." He dipped the pen in the ink and his white hair drooped over the fatal pages that were laid before him.

## II

July 26, 1830.

Dumas, who had awakened early, was packing a large valise preparatory to setting out for the newly conquered territories of Algeria when there came a sharp rap at the door. Achille Comte, who had been running all the way and whose face was streaked with perspiration, burst into the room and flung a newspaper upon the table.

"Have you heard the news?" he exclaimed.

Dumas shook his head.

"The ordinances are announced in the *Moniteur!*"

The coat he was packing dropped from Dumas's hand. He turned to his servant, Joseph, and cried: "Go to my gunmaker's and bring

me back my double-barrelled gun and two hundred bullets of twenty caliber." *Le jour de gloire est arrivé!* Charles X had signed and published his own death-warrant. The lean old monarch, King Stork, front and flower of the Elder Branch, had flung his formidable bomb into the powder-magazine of Paris. Dumas and Comte descended to the streets, Dumas full of mingled forebodings and martial threats, and Comte still incredulous that Paris would rise. The city was quiet. It lay peaceably beneath a warm sun. A yellow light dusted along the quais, the Seine slid noiselessly beneath the bridges, and gossiping pedestrians hurried by on their way to work. Now and again the scarlet uniform of one of the Swiss Guards shone at a high window of the Tuileries. The two young men breakfasted at number seven, rue de l'Université, where the blue-eyed young "Mars from the provinces" pouted prettily when she learned that she was not to go to Algeria after all. Then Comte went on his way to discover further information and Dumas directed his steps toward the Palais-Royal, that presumable source of all the inside facts. But they knew nothing there. The Duc d'Orléans was carefully cloistered at Neuilly. The Duc de Chartres was at the head of his regiment at Joigny. M. de Broval was at Villiers. M. Oudard had disappeared into thin air. M. Deviolaine was locked in his room. In times of crisis it is often the case that the scheming man who expects to profit by rebellion is difficult to locate. He lurks in a safe harbor until he is certain which way the wind is blowing. The monkey sits in the shadow while the cat stretches his foolish paw into the flames for the chestnut shaped like a crown.

The eyes and ears of Paris were located in the cafés as much as in the newspaper offices and royal establishments. Dumas, therefore, leaving the dumb corridors of the Palais-Royal behind him, went to the Café du Roi, a hostelry frequented by Royalist journalists. There he found Théaulon, Théodore Anne, Brissot, Rochefort and Merle, the complaisant husband of Madame Dorval, all writers connected with such conservative sheets as the *Foudre, Le Drapeau Blanc,* and *Quotidienne.* Lassagne, too, was there. Excepting Lassagne, this group approved the ordinances, and Dumas, who held different views from these journalists, did not care to discuss the matter. He abhorred disputing with his friends. It was so much easier to fight duels with

them. He sat by himself, then, sipping his coffee and waiting for an acquaintance whose political views agreed more closely with his own. In the meantime various idle pedestrians sauntered up and down the street outside the smoky window of the Café du Roi. They talked calmly, seemingly unmoved by the historical consequences of the day. It was the lull before the storm, that period of deceptive quiet when the leaf hangs unmoved although the muttering wind already manifests itself on the horizon through the bent tops of distant trees. Those ferocious instigators of revolutions who creep out of cellars and dark sewers at the last minute and raise barricades were moving uneasily in their hidden corners, perhaps, but they had not appeared as yet. Paris lolled pleasantly in its bright bath of sunshine and Dumas lolled with it. He was aroused from his solitary reverie by Étienne Arago, director of the Vaudeville Théâtre, who saw Dumas bowed over his coffee-cup and hurried him off to the Institute where François Arago, Étienne's famous brother, was scheduled to deliver an address before the Academy.

The Academicians, strutting about in their blue coats braided with green, were like so many turkey-cocks. Dumas and Étienne Arago, entering the Holy of Holies somewhat late, were surprised to note that the meeting was not in progress and that the hall was dotted with small gesticulating groups of Academicians. A rumor had threaded the assembly that François Arago would refuse to speak and the more startled of the Immortals were retarding the meeting. François Arago, Dumas saw, was engaged in a somewhat acrimonious conversation with Maréchal Marmont, Duc de Raguse. Dumas and Étienne Arago pushed through the Academicians and reached the *savant* just as Marmont left him. "What does he say?" Étienne asked his brother as he nodded his head toward the subscriber to the capitulation of Paris. "He is furious," replied François, his eyes following the disgruntled Maréchal. "He says *they* are the type of people who fling themselves in the very teeth of ruin, and he only hopes he won't be obliged to draw swords on their behalf." Étienne Arago snorted contemptuously. *They* were waiting at Saint-Cloud for a miracle from heaven, perhaps. In answer to another question François Arago declared that he would not speak. Cuvier, passing at that moment, heard this decision and drew the *savant* aside. He was immediately sur-

rounded by a group of solemnly arguing turkey-cocks, and, after fifteen minutes' discussion, Arago bowed his head and consented to speak. His address was to be on Fresnel, famed for his work on the speed and nature of light, but, much to the disturbance of the Academicians who had insisted on his speaking, he injected into this supposedly scientific discourse so many burning allusions to the political crisis that hung like a thunder-cloud over Paris that his address became a clever call to arms. Dumas and Étienne Arago left the Institute laughing at the shocked expression on Cuvier's face. Arago went his way to mingle with the crowds in the streets for the revolutionary fury was rising in him. Dumas, after a visit with Madame Chasseriau, proceeded toward Véfour's, the prospect of a well-spiced dinner luring him away from political argument. Already queer tremors were shaking Paris. The Bourse, that barometer of political crises, had been in an uproar all day and three per cent. Consols had fallen six francs. People were talking in louder voices and young men were hurrying down side streets on mysterious errands. As Dumas crossed the gardens of the Palais-Royal he saw a crowd eddying about some youths who stood on chairs reading from the *Moniteur* in stentorian voices. These imitations of Camille Desmoulins were not successful. The crowd listened complacently, gaped with mild interest and then dispersed toward prospective dinners. After his hurried meal Dumas ran to the de Leuven home where he found Madame de Leuven greatly upset over the unexplained absence of her husband and son. Dumas obligingly set forth in search of them. The elder de Leuven was at a closed meeting in the offices of the *Courrier Français* where the famous protest in the name of the Charter was being signed by forty-four journalists, each one of whom risked his head with his signature. Adolphe had been despatched to M. Laffitte's house but he had found the bankers' doors locked. M. Laffitte, like the Duc d'Orléans, was waiting. By eleven o'clock Dumas was back in his rooms meditating on the strange calmness of the day.

Beside his bed Joseph had placed the double-barrelled gun and two hundred bullets of twenty caliber.

July 27, 1830.

Another warm clear day with a bright sun mounting to the zenith.

Dumas, who had waked early, hurried to his mother's rooms for breakfast. The poor old lady was quite tranquil in mind and body for no rumors of the fierce gathering storm had penetrated to her quiet Thebaid in the Quartier du Luxembourg. There the buxom housewives sluiced the stone steps of their houses with buckets of water, scurried to the boulangeries for their long loaves of crisp bread, and uncorked the tall bottles of pale red wine. It is true that certain sober faces met the early pedestrian at the street corners, faces peering into the crumpled sheets of hastily-printed journals and then lifted with tightened lips, but these faces always disappeared in the direction of the many streets leading to the quais. Dumas, his hasty visit accomplished, hurried in the direction of these streets, too, meeting Paul Foucher, Victor Hugo's brother-in-law. As Dumas saw Foucher, who laid claims to authorship, about to draw a five-act play from his pocket to read then and there upon the street he hurriedly hailed a cab and ordered the driver to carry him to Armand Carrel's house.

Carrel, one of the editors of the *National,* was an unofficial leader of the Opposition. He had returned from political exile after the coronation of Charles X. At this time he was a young man of twenty-eight years with a retreating forehead, a long sharp nose, and a bilious complexion, generally clothed in patent leather boots, a black cravat tightly knotted about his neck, a black frock coat, a waistcoat of white piqué or chamois leather, and grey trousers. Dumas found him coolly eating his breakfast and reading the morning paper wherein was printed the protest of the forty-four journalists against the illegal suppression of the press. It is time to set down the names of these forty-four guardsmen of liberty who had put their necks in danger. Carrel was one. The others were MM. Thiers, Gauja, Mignet, Chambolle, Peysse, Stapfer, Dubochet and Rolle of the *National;* Leroux, Guizard, Dejean and de Remusat of the *Globe;* Senty, Haussman, Dussart, Busoni, Barbaroux, Chalas, Billard. Baude and Coste of *Le Temps;* Guyet, Moussette, Avenel, Alexis de Jussieu, Chatelain, Dupont, and de la Pelouze of the *Courrier français;* Année, Cauchois-Lemaire and Évariste Dumoulin of the *Constitutionnel;* Sarrans *fils* of the *Courrier des Electeurs;* Auguste Fabre and Ader of the *Tribune des départements;* Lavasseur, Plagnol and Fazy of the *Révolution;* Larreguy and Bert of the *Journal du Commerce;* Léon Pillet of the

*Journal de Paris;* Bohain and Roqueplan of *Figaro;* and Vaillant of *Sylphe.* These were the men who dared to speak out on the evening of the twenty-sixth and these were the names that Dumas read on the morning of the twenty-seventh. How the government would respond to this protest was the problem. Carrel, who had determined to stay indoors all day, weakened at Dumas's urgent solicitations and went out into the streets with him, first placing a pair of pocket pistols in his coat. They tramped the boulevards from the rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin to the rue Neuve-Vivienne and observed a rising excitement everywhere. People were rushing in the direction of the rue de Richelieu. An excited pedestrian, upon being hailed, paused long enough to stutter that the offices of *Le Temps* were being sacked by mounted police. It was patent that signs of insurrection were imminent. Paris, which had lived through the twenty-sixth with some degree of calmness, was rising like an ominous sea. The builders of barricades began to appear from their dark corners.

Dumas and Carrel hurried to the offices of *Le Temps.* Here for the first time the young playwright saw actual signs of revolt. This time it was not the spectacle of dramatically-minded youths reading newspapers from chairs *à la* Camille Desmoulins. A score of police were drawn up in front of the printing office and awaiting the arrival of the Commissionnaire de Police. Behind this row of uniforms was an attentive mob. It is always the mob that makes revolutions and on many of the faces in this gathering was that ominous flush that prophesies ruin to governments and dynasties. The hour, however, was early as yet. Monsieur le Commissionnaire de Police arrived, white scarf of office, sword and all, and knocked solemnly at the printing house door. As he knocked the door opened and framed in the portal stood Baude, one of the editors of *Le Temps.* Baude was a formidable apparition, a giant with thick black hair and a rough tremendous voice. Behind him were lined up his thirty or forty editors and printers, men with set faces and glittering eyes. A dead silence fell upon the street and two thousand people breathed so softly that this tableau, the first dramatic scene of the Revolution of 1830, seemed like an array of waxen figures, a scene misplaced from the galleries of Madame Tussaud. Baude spoke first, his rough voice grating the air. "What do you want, Monsieur?" Monsieur le Commissionnaire de Police

stuttered his answer. "I come . . . in consequence . . . the Ordinances . . ." "To break up our presses?" roared Baude. "Then in the name of the Code which is both anterior and superior to the Ordinances I call upon you to respect them." Those metal monsters of liberty, the printing presses, stood in their stalls and waited. Baude held forth a copy of the Code opened at the article on housebreaking. Monsieur le Commissionnaire de Police turned uneasily. "A locksmith," he said. "Send somebody to find a locksmith." "We will wait until he comes," replied Baude. A murmur rippled across the attentive crowd and it pushed closer to the police. The locksmith arrived. Monsieur le Commissionnaire de Police gave his order and the trembling fellow approached the printing house doors to force them. Baude barred his way. He halted him by reading the article on housebreaking from the Code. The locksmith hesitated and then bared his head. A cheer went up from the crowd. Monsieur le Commissionnaire de Police reiterated his order to the bewildered artisan. Baude called for witnesses to this potential violence and five hundred voices responded simultaneously. The locksmith, hearing this growling approval of Baude, exclaimed: "Get somebody else to do your job," and disappeared in the mob. A second locksmith was secured but as the police pushed him through the crowd he dexterously slipped his picklocks into the hands of a spectator. These keys were passed from person to person and disappeared forever. Finally a blacksmith was summoned. The mob, surging closer and closer to this comedy with tragic implications, awakened the fear of Monsieur le Commissionnaire de Police and he ordered his men to clear the street. The spectators were forced toward the Place Louvois and the Arcade Colbert but as they slowly retreated they shouted, *"Vive la Charte!"* Measured steps were heard and a large reinforcement of police was observed approaching from the direction of the Palais-Royal. Dumas and Carrel withdrew with the mob. They had witnessed enough. The moral victory remained with the Opposition. Baude had set the tune to which Paris would dance for three days.

The two young men entered the *National* offices at two o'clock. The people in the streets were still quiet but a shiver of excitement permeated the atmosphere and the pedestrians walked faster, experiencing that instinctive terror which animals feel at the imminence

of a storm. At seven o'clock in the evening, Dumas, who had been wandering about with Carrel after leaving the *National* offices, was at the top of the rue Montmartre when he stopped suddenly and lifted his head. From the direction of the Palais-Royal came a curious muttering sound as though a gigantic rattle had been suddenly whirred. "What is that?" he exclaimed. Carrel's face grew pale. "It was a volley being fired," he replied. The obsequies of the Elder Branch were being played on muskets. A hot summer twilight enveloped the city and into it mounted a sulphurous puff of smoke. Carrel prudently went home but Dumas dashed off at a run toward the Place de la Bourse. He encountered his medical friend, Thibaut, before he had gone fifty yards and Thibaut explained what had happened. A man had been killed in the rue du Lycée and three more in the rue Saint-Honoré. The Lancers had charged in the rue de Richelieu and upon the Place du Palais-Royal. A barricade had been demolished in the rue de Richelieu. A barricade! The ominous figures had come out of their dark corners at last.

Dumas started toward the *rive gauche* but as he entered the rue Vivienne he saw the long slant of bayonets approaching from the other end. The troops advanced with regular steps, taking up the whole width of the street, and forcing men, women and children before them. Maréchal Marmont, Duc de Raguse, was investing Paris for His Majesty, Charles X, who was playing whist at Saint-Cloud. Dumas sought protection in the café of the Théâtre des Nouveautés and there he peered through the windows and watched the soldiers pass and heard the women cry from the windows, "Do not fire on the people!" The troops reached the Place de la Bourse, deployed, and left a dozen soldiers in a rickety old guardhouse near the Bourse. To grumbling drums the regiment disappeared in the direction of the Place de la Bastille. No sooner had they gone than urchins ran up to the guardhouse shouting, *"Vive la Charte!"* The soldiers paid no attention. Soon stones followed the shouting and a soldier, infuriated at being struck in the head by a rock, fired his musket off and killed a young woman who was loitering on the opposite side of the Place de la Bourse. Cries of "Murder!" resounded, lights were extinguished, shops shut and shutters snapped into place, and in a twinkling the square was cleared. At that moment a group of perhaps a dozen men

debouched from the rue des Filles-Saint-Thomas shouting, "Stop the plays! Close the theaters! They are killing people in the streets of Paris!" This miniature revolution was headed by Étienne Arago. They stumbled against the body of the dead woman which lay across the street. Arago ordered the corpse carried to the steps of the peristyle of the Théâtre des Nouveautés where everybody might see it. The body was taken to this high brilliantly-lighted bier and then the shouting group marched down the rue de Montmorency. That evening Arago was instrumental in closing most of the theaters of Paris.

Dumas and his few companions lurked behind the dusty panes of the café of the Théâtre des Nouveautés and discussed the agitation that was causing Paris to quiver like a giant in a first attack of epilepsy. One young theorist put forward the proposition that the uprising would prove as abortive as that of 1827. Another logician demonstrated to his own satisfaction that the riot had not the strength to develop into a revolution. Dumas shook his head. This discussion was abruptly terminated by the crash of muskets in the immediate vicinity, shouts, and the terrible sounds of hand-to-hand combat. From the windows Dumas and the contemptuous logicians saw that the rickety guardhouse had been assaulted by a score of strange nocturnal figures, ape-like men with fowling pieces, unshaven faces and fierce eyes. The makers of revolutions had appeared at last. These men, horrible phantoms of 1789, overpowered the troops of the Duc de Raguse, took away their guns, cartridge-pouches and swords, and sent them away by the rue Joquelet. Then they set fire to the guardhouse, picked up the limp corpse of the woman from the peristyle of the theater, and set off down the rue des Filles-Saint-Thomas bearing the body before them and shouting, "Vengeance!" The rickety building burned most of the night, throwing a lurid illumination over the square and lighting brown-red puddles that coagulated between the cobbles. The logicians of the café of the Théâtre des Nouveautés were silent.

Toward midnight Dumas left the café and went down the rue Vivienne. The Perron Passage was closed so he continued his homeward march by way of the rue des Petits-Champs and the rue de Richelieu. It was dark in the city. It was quiet. In the distance the flare of the burning guardhouse lighted the high roofs. As the young man walked swiftly through the rue de l'Échelle he saw silent shadows

moving in the obscurity, shadows which cried, *"Qui vive!"* when he approached them. "A friend," replied the young man. He heard the faint click of picks and saw these nocturnal creatures hurrying to and fro with huge cobble-stones in their arms. They were raising a barricade, raising it so silently that they seemed like figures moving in a dream. They labored steadily without speaking. Dumas continued on his way. In the court of the Tuileries campfires were burning and their fitful glow illuminated stacks of muskets from which bloomed the long silver blossoms of bayonets. By the gates a sentinel cried out hoarsely, "Keep away!" and cocked his gun. Having reached the rue de l'Université without meeting another living soul the young man looked back. The silence seemed alive as though invisible creatures were sliding stealthily through empty streets.

July 28, 1830.

Dumas was awakened by Achille Comte who brought word that the Quartier des Écoles was in a state of open insurrection. The students, furious at the dilatory tactics of such men as Laffitte, the banker, Casimir Périer, the statesman, and La Fayette, the old hero, were out *en masse,* their pockets crammed with gunpowder. They demanded action and they refused to permit the revolution to simmer down to a mere riot because of tentative Liberal leaders. It was the destruction of Royalty they demanded and the establishment of a Republic. Laffitte might hide behind the locked doors of his house and wait to see which way the cat jumped; Casimir Périer might keep one rolling eye on Saint-Cloud and temporize; La Fayette, the father of revolutions who had known Washington, argued with Franklin and denounced Marat, might wait vainly and impatiently for either the deputies or the people to call him into action; the students were prepared to take matters into their own hands and kill a few Royalists. Dumas, tired of the rôle of a spectator, prepared for action. He was a hot young Republican now and no longer a dependent on the Duc d'Orléans. After making his usual morning call on Madame Dumas he attempted to see Godefroy Cavaignac, brother of that General Eugène Cavaignac who was to be dictator of France for a few months during the Revolution of 1848, but he could not find him. Cavaignac, like all the young leaders, was here, there and everywhere. Dumas

gave up the search after wandering about the city for an hour or two and returned to his rooms in the rue de l'Université. There he put on a brand-new *costume de chasse,* stuffed his pockets with shot, slung his powder-horn on his shoulder, picked up his gun and started forth to advance the cause of liberty. Dumas, the revolutionist, had his comic side. Changing his clothes in order to kill somebody was proof of it.

In the street outside his door he encountered the indefatigable Étienne Arago and Gauja, one of the forty-four journalists who had signed the famous protest, going from house to house and hoarsely calling the citizens to arms. These two men were excellent echoes of 1789. While they were hammering with the butts of their muskets at closed portals two mounted policemen, their brass trappings glittering, turned the corner. Arago and Gauja fired at them and one of the policemen fell pierced by two balls while the other, wheeling his horse until it reared violently, disappeared in a cloud of dust. Decidedly this was revolution. Dumas, observing the sudden death of the officer of the law, grew pale and contemplative. He clutched his gun tighter as Arago and Gauja continued on their way shouting, "To arms, *citoyens!*" A group of neighbors gathered about Dumas, lured by his brilliant hunting costume, and tacitly put themselves under his leadership. The young man observed his weaponless detachment and became inflamed with the mob passion. He ordered them to raise barricades at each end of the rue de l'Université and in a second they were at work, uprooting huge cobble-stones with crowbars and carrying them to the extremities of the street. As they labored they could hear the drums beating in the gardens of the Tuileries. The grumbling tattoo was like a gigantic voice calling. Shouting students could be heard swarming in the nearby streets. Over the Cité rose a pall of smoke and mingled in it were voices, the clatter of hoofs, stray shots, and the eternal grumble of drums. There are no revolutions without drums.

Dumas and his neighbors perspired and swore as they dragged the huge cobbles to the barricades. Suddenly three soldiers of the Garde Royale appeared at the top of the rue du Bac and Dumas, seeing them, shouted: "Here are three rifles. All you have to do is take them." The miniature army surrounded the bewildered soldiers who

gave up their guns readily enough. These guns were unloaded but that made no difference. A second later a group of vociferating students led by a young man dressed in an apple-green frock coat appeared at the end of the rue de l'Université. This young man was Alexandre Bixio, the medical student who was sometimes to be seen at Charles Nodier's *salon* on Sunday evenings. He carried a service rifle. The two groups, Dumas's army and Bixio's students, fraternized at once and all set to work on the barricades. When two fairly sturdy walls were raised closing the street at either end, Dumas, calmly deserting his army, set forth in search of new worlds to conquer. He prowled round by way of the Place de la Revolution and traversed the entire length of the rue Saint-Honoré. He saw that the barricades in the rue de l'Échelle and the rue des Pyramides had been smashed down. When he reached the rue de Richelieu he saw a regiment, its facings glittering, at the top of the Place Louvois, a dense line of troops at the further side of the Palais-Royal and a squadron of Lancers in the Place itself. Clad in his hunting costume and carrying a gun he could go no farther without getting into trouble. He, therefore, slipped into his old offices at the Palais-Royal, and while watching the passing troops from the window, upset poor M. Oudard, who had returned to his desk, by fiery comments and threats to shoot General Wall who was riding by. The regiments disappeared in the direction of the Hôtel de Ville from whence the sound of heavy firing could be heard. Dumas descended to the street, and, shouldering his gun, quietly proceeded along behind the thudding feet of the soldiers.

The rue de Richelieu was in a turmoil. Behind the soldiers poured the revolutionaries, blotting out the fleurs de lys, the royal monograms, and daubing with mud the mottoes on the walls. The fierce cry of *"Vive la Charte!"* was succeeded by *"A bas les Bourbons!"* Armed men, mostly young and with the marks of the *écoles* upon them, slid around corners, swirled in groups, and sought tactical positions from which they could make a stand. Soldiers of the National Guard lurked behind shop doors. Women screamed from windows and waved their handkerchiefs. Nobody walked; everybody ran. No one spoke calmly; words were jerked out in half-finished expressions. A universal fever swept through this street. Chaos had sprung up in an hour. Dumas, his heart in his mouth, hurried through the gesticu-

lating mob of men. He was pushed to right and left but he clutched his gun and doggedly proceeded on his way. He met Armand Carrel and conversed with him for a moment. He encountered Charras, of the École Polytechnique, who was one of the field commanders of the day. He called at the Café de la Porte Saint-Honoré, still conducted by young Hiraux, and learned that the Duc de Raguse had offered his services to Charles X and was in personal command of the troops in Paris. When he reached the Place de la Révolution he stopped short in stupefaction. No, it was not a dream.

The tricolor was floating from one of the high squat towers of Notre-Dame de Paris!

This wisp of color, red and white and blue, which Dumas had not seen since 1815, caused him to stop and lean against the parapet. All the noble memories of the Revolution and the Empire rushed back into his mind. Flag of Arcola! Flag of Marengo! Flag of Austerlitz! Colors that crowned the tricorned hats of Danton and Robespierre and Saint-Just! He was aroused from his martial revery by a clattering fusillade from the Grève side of the square and raising his head he saw sulphurous smoke rising in dense clouds. He heard the screams of wounded horses and the shouting of men, that ferocious baying that is always the annunciation of sudden death. As he stood by the parapet clutching his gun, a trifle confused and uncertain which way to turn, grimy figures began to collect about him, youths carrying guns, ancient pistols, rusty swords, hatchets, and one or two of the immemorial pikes. "Will you lead us?" one of them asked. The infant revolution, bewildered, not knowing which way to go, whom to kill, or what to destroy, was still searching for leaders. Dumas shouldered his gun and marched off across the Pont de la Revolution followed by his motley troops. He went through the rue de Lille carefully avoiding the Orsay barracks which commanded the quai. The drums of the National Guard were beating the *rappel* before he reached the rue de l'Université. At his house he stopped and halted his army which now consisted of some fifty men, two drums, and a hastily manufactured banner. Thirty of these men possessed rifles but there was not ten cartridges among them. Something had to be done. Still followed by his detachment he forced his way into a nearby armourer's shop and was informed there that a

certain Monsieur at the small gate of the Institute in the rue Mazarine was distributing powder. Off started the little army again and at the place indicated they received a dozen charges of powder each. At Joubert's, in the Dauphine passage, they were given fifty bullets. That meant about two balls to each gun. There was also Providence to trust.

Inefficiently armed but ready and eager Dumas's army now turned toward the field of action. They progressed toward the Place de Grève by way of the rue Guenégaud, the Pont Neuf, and the Quai de l'Horloge. Ahead of them sounded the ominous music of musketry and cannon. The nearer Dumas approached this terrible symphony the higher his heart climbed into his throat. Suddenly debouching upon the Quai aux Fleurs at the head of his troops Dumas found himself face to face with an entire regiment. It was the Fifteenth Light Infantry. Dumas looked at his fifty men with their thirty guns and fifty rounds of ammunition and then at the fifteen hundred stolid troopers who stood at rest, their muskets grounded, their pouches bulging with ammunition. He decided to stop. A captain advanced from the regiment to meet him. "What is your business, Monsieur?" the officer inquired politely. "A passage, if you please," answered Dumas. The officer smiled. "Where are you going?" "To the Hôtel de Ville." The officer's smile grew broader. "What to do?" "Why . . . why, to fight!" exclaimed Dumas. The captain burst into a roar of laughter. "Really, Monsieur Dumas," he said, "I didn't think you as mad as that." Dumas, slightly surprised and immensely pleased that the Captain recognized him, returned to his grumbling army. A council of war, well out of gunshot of the Fifteenth Light Infantry, took place. "Upon my word," complained one of Dumas's young men, "Do we or do we not wish to go where there is fighting?" "We do," was the response. "All right. Let us go down the rue du Harlay, the quai des Orfèvres and return to the Pont Notre-Dame by the rue de la Draperie and the rue de la Cité." A moment later the smiling Captain watched the ragged little army reascending the Quai de l'Horloge, both drums beating loudly and the manufactured banner waving proudly. At its head marched a tall young man with a bushy mop of crisp hair.

A quarter of an hour later Dumas and his followers issued forth by the little street of Glatigny and found the revolutionaries about to charge the Hôtel de Ville by way of the suspension bridge. Smoke billowed over the yellow river and here and there on the grey cobbles lay curious heaps of clothing that sometimes twitched. Dumas ordered the charge beaten upon his two drums and hastened forward. Bridge of Clausen! Horatius Cocles! Was he the son of his father or not? He could see the insurgents marching toward the bridge boldly following a tricolor standard. Suddenly a cannon was fired. No sooner had the terrific detonation sounded than the bridge was raked by grapeshot and eight or ten insurgents pitched upon their faces. The disordered revolutionaries fell back. With indescribable rapidity the cannon was reloaded and fired again. This time the bridge became a shambles of wounded and dead. Still these mad men pushed forward. But when the cannon belched flame and grapeshot for the third time and regular troops advanced with fixed bayonets that glittered like a dragon's long teeth through the smoke the revolutionaries broke rank, turned in a riot of fear and fled in all directions. Behind them sounded the roar of the cannon and the clatter of musketry fire. Dumas, already in the network of small streets and running as fast as his long legs could carry him, forgot all about his command. Bridge of Clausen, indeed! He decided that he had done enough for one day, that—after all—he was a novice so far as war was concerned. He proceeded to call on his friend, Lethière, and drank some rum-arrack, excellent for palpitations of the heart. There he stayed and listened to the news as it was brought by various friends. Fighting was going on in all the arrondissements. The boulevards were in flame from the Madeleine to the Bastille. Half the trees had been cut down for barricades. In the faubourg and in the rue de Saint-Antoine the people had flung furniture from the windows upon the heads of the troops arriving from Vincennes. Bedsteads, cupboards, chests of drawers, fire-dogs, even a piano, were rained upon the heads of the crushed soldiery. The attack in the Louvre district had advanced as far as the Place Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois. Dumas, sipping his rum-arrack peaceably, listened to all this with the equanimity of a retired hero. It seemed that the members of the Chamber of Deputies were beginning to arouse themselves. It was about time.

Five deputies were to wait upon the Duc de Raguse and lay certain propositions before him. These representatives were MM. Laffitte, Casimir Périer, Mauguin, Lobau and General Gérard. Temporising deputies! Men who negotiated with the scoundrels who were firing grapeshot through the streets of Paris! Dumas discarded his equanimity and waxed loudly Republican. When nine o'clock sounded and it was properly dark he proceeded home by narrow alleys and side streets, changed his clothes, put away his gun, and once more became the young playwright. He could not stay indoors, however. He decided to call on General La Fayette whom he knew slightly. Wrapping his cloak about him he descended to the streets again. The gates of the Tuileries and the Carrousel were closed and before them were posted sentries. The square of the Carrousel had been transformed into a huge camp where thousands of phantoms appeared to be sleeping upon their arms. The bells of Notre-Dame continued to ring ceaselessly as though some mad Quasimodo were swinging on them. Pedestrians were few and there was no traffic. The barricades had stopped that. In the dark corners and shuttered *tapis-francs* the gnomes of the revolution gathered and talked in low voices. Dumas saw La Fayette. The old patriot was uneasy for he had determined to leave the deputies. "Why not move without them?" asked Dumas. "Let the people drive me to it and I am willing to act," replied La Fayette. The old man seemed to be reaching for a sword. Dumas ran to the house of Étienne Arago where he found most of the revolutionary leaders gathered. He told them what La Fayette had said and Arago rose to his feet and exclaimed: "Come, let us go to the *National*." At the newspaper office a sublime forgery was in progress. Taschereau, Charles Teste and Béranger were concocting a Provisional Government consisting of La Fayette, General Gérard and the Duc de Choiseul. A proclamation was created and these three men's names were solemnly signed at the bottom of it. La Fayette, General Gérard and the Duc de Choiseul slept calmly during the night of the twenty-eighth, profoundly unaware that they were members of a Provisional Government or that they had issued a proclamation. They would find that out the next morning when they gazed upon the hoardings of Paris. Midnight came; the bells of Notre-Dame continued to ring; sentries plodded up and down before the Tuileries; the Swiss

Guards slept on their arms; the few lights were extinguished. There was nothing for Dumas to do but return home, go to bed, and wait for the sun.

July 29, 1830.

Dumas turned uneasily in his bed. A giant voice was speaking in his dreams and the sonorous accents were indistinguishable. What was the giant saying? Dumas opened his eyes to the sunlight and his ears to the roar of musketry at the same time. Joseph, his servant, was running about the room and wringing his hands in fear. The firing, not intermittent but fierce and sustained, seemed to be in the immediate neighborhood, around the corner, in the street outside the window. It was everywhere. The acrid odor of gunpowder permeated the air. Volumes of smoke rose over the rue du Bac, the rue Saint-Dominique, and the Place Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin. The rumble of ferocious voices tore through the morning air. Dumas sat up in bed. Of course! The Museum of Artillery in the Place Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin! A military post had been stationed there and the revolutionists were assaulting it. As the young man dressed hastily he thought of the archaeological treasures in the Museum of Artillery, the armor, the guns, the swords, the metal memorials of Henri III, Henri IV, and Louis XIII. The wretches! They would pillage all of those beautiful objects and fling them into the streets or smash them to pieces. One of the first gestures of revolutions was to destroy the evidences of past history, the dreaming edifices of ancient times, the pathetic remnants of vanished glories. For an instant Dumas was an anti-revolutionist. He darted toward the Place Saint-Thomas d'Aquin and reached it just as the insurgents were being repulsed for the third time. These men, devoid equally of fear and tactics, were attacking the Museum by the two openings of the rue du Bac and the rue Saint-Dominique, and as the soldiers stationed in the building could rake these two streets easily the undisciplined offence was futile. Dumas looked at the houses about him. He judged that the buildings in the rue du Bac, which on both sides formed the corner of the rue Gribauval, backed on the Place Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin. He communicated this information to a group of powder-blackened men who had paused near him and in an instant they were hammering with their muskets

at the doors of thirty-five, rue du Bac. After a pause the door opened and a dozen men dashed up the narrow flights of stairs to the attic. This room, or, rather, skeleton of a room, formed a natural bastion—not a Bastion Saint-Gervais, for it was not so exposed—and from it Dumas and his companions fired with deadly effect through the nearby windows of the Museum of Artillery. Five or six troopers, unaware of this attack from an unexpected quarter, fell and after ten minutes the rattle of musketry dwindled and died away. A short while later the porter of the Museum appeared at the door plainly gesticulating that the soldiers had withdrawn. Dumas and his companions raced down stairs, vaulted the back fences, and made for the Museum.

The insurgents were already pouring through the corridors of this home of the past, men with stained faces, bloody hands, and smoking muskets. "For God's sake!" cried Dumas, "respect the armor!" The insurgents laughed. It was for the armor and weapons they had attacked the Museum. What did they know or care about the past! It was the future that concerned them. Grasping hands reached up and wrenched spears, pikes, swords, arquebuses, helmets and obsolete guns from the walls. Dumas decided that the only thing for him to do was to make away with the most precious objects he could find and restore them to the nation after the madness of the revolution was over. He, therefore, seized the shield, helmet and sword of François Premier, the arquebus which Charles IX had used so effectively from the balcony of the Louvre on St. Bartholomew's Day, and staggered from the Museum with the helmet on his bushy hair, the shield fastened to his arm, the long sword by his side, and the arquebus over his shoulder. His appearance was startling and people, observing him pass solemnly to the rue de l'Université, were uncertain whether a ghost had been disinterred from the Museum or a strange and outlandish army had descended on Paris. Dumas puffed up his four flights of stairs thinking that if François Premier had really carried this shield and worn this helmet at Marignan there was no reason to disbelieve in the feats of Ogier the Dane and Roland.

An hour later Dumas was in the Place de l'Odéon where the revolutionary forces were being marshalled. The Place was bristling with arms. There were men with heavy old-fashioned rampart guns stolen

from the Museum of Artillery, men dragging cannon captured from various military posts, men driving carriages heaped with barrels of gunpowder, and men moulding bullets out of nearby lead-gutters. At one time the cry, "Paper is wanted for wads," resounded and an instant later from all the open windows about the Place poured down an avalanche of books. Dumas received a terrific blow on the head from a *Gradus ad Parnassum*. What the Cumaean Sibyl would have made of this is a mystery. About a hundred old soldiers were scattered through this mob, and, practical fellows that they were, in less than an hour they had manufactured three thousand cartridges. During this period of preparation there was continual shouting. *"Vive la République!" "Vive la Charte!"* One individual started to bellow, *"Vive Napoléon III!"* and, when reproved by others with the explanation that they were not fighting for Napoleon but for the Republic, rejoined that he would fight for whom he pleased. A man in a buttoned-up grey coat, a tricorne hat, and holding one hand behind his back, rode across the Place on a white horse, and, as a joke, some wags began to shout, *"Vive l'Empereur!"* An old lady of seventy, half-blind, took the joke seriously and fell on her knees crying: "Oh, Jesus! I shall not die, then, without seeing him again." Finally, ammunition being distributed, guns loaded, and captains chosen, the entire mob set off down the rue de l'Odéon singing *La Marseillaise*. At the Bussy crossing they were divided into three detachments, one proceeding toward the rue Sainte-Marguerite, another to the rue Dauphine, and the third, to which Dumas attached himself, straight ahead. The purpose of this group was to attack the Louvre by way of the Pont des Arts, in other words—to run straight upon the horns of the bull. When this detachment debouched on the quai an ominous spectacle presented itself to Dumas.

Before him with only the narrow Seine between towered the grey bulk of the palace of Catherine de Médicis. From every window leaned two of the Swiss Guard with levelled rifles. A rampart of mattresses had been raised on the Charles IX balcony and behind it crouched a squad of the Guards. Through the gratings of the two gardens, the garden of the Infante and the garden of the Queen, were double lines of Swiss drawn up in battle array. Along the parapet wound a great snake of cuirassiers glittering with steel and gold, its

head already in the Tuileries gate while its tail still undulated through the Quai de l'École. In the distance stood the Louvre Colonnade almost hidden by a cloud of smoke. On the right rose the solid towers of Notre-Dame with the tricolor flying from their balconies. The vibrations of the tocsin quivered in the air. High above burned a fiery sun. From all the houses along the quais sounded a desultory crackle of rifle-fire. Dumas paled when he faced this spectacle but he countermarched at the order of his captain and proceeded along the quai by the Palais Mazarin as far as a small guardhouse. There he tried to crawl under a turnstile shelter but the coming and going of many excited men disturbed him and after he had been stepped on five or six times he crawled out and scuttled for the fountain, installing himself behind the largest bronze lion he could find. The great entrance gate of the Palais Mazarin was on his right and on his left was the small side door in the Institute leading up to the apartments of the people who resided there, among them Madame Chasseriau. Directly before him was the empty stretch of the Pont des Arts and in the center of the further end of the bridge was a cannon. Dumas drew out his handkerchief, mopped his forehead, and meditated on the solidity of his bronze lion. Behind the cannon was the undulating regiment of cuirassiers and behind them again were the Swiss Guards in their red coats with white lace facings and bear-skin caps with gilded plates. Dumas gazed yearningly toward the small door of the Institute. Then he looked at the revolutionaries about him.

For the most part they were street boys, shop-men and students. The older men (and all of them were young) carried muskets and fowling pieces while the boys brandished sabres as large as themselves, rusty bayonets, and pistols. It was these boys of the streets, *gamins de la révolution,* who formed the vanguard of every attack. Their ragged garments fluttered behind them as they rushed upon death shouting for a cause which they barely comprehended. M. de Launay had heard their shrill voices in the courtyard of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. It was these boys who swarmed upon the Pont des Arts when the revolutionary drums beat the charge directly after the cuirassiers had disappeared within the Tuileries gate. Flourishing their rusty sabres and discharging their pistols they raced furiously toward the black mouth of the cannon before them. Dumas, behind

his lion, saw the lighted match approach the touchhole of the big gun and strove to make himself as small as possible. There came the fierce shattering detonation and a spray of grapeshot raked the bridge leaving in its murderous wake a heap of crumpled and twitching bodies. The Swiss Guards immediately opened a platoon-fire and the attackers, such as were left with the use of their legs, fell back in screaming disorder before this hail of bullets. Some of the revolutionists leaped from the bridge and could be seen an instant later swimming in the yellow waters of the Seine. Then a huge pall of smoke descended upon the river and hid from Dumas's view the besieged Palace and its defenders. Through this smoke from time to time came the vivid flash of the cannon. Bullets spattered against the bronze lion while Dumas fired as fast as he could into the curdling curtain of smoke. At his feet gasped a revolutionist who had been shot through the lungs and who had crawled painfully toward the fountain for water only to collapse exhausted just beyond the brink. At the third detonation of the huge gun the young man, observing that the insurgents were fleeing past him toward the rue Mazarine, the rue des Petits-Augustins, and the blind alley skirting the Mint, decided that he had fought for liberty long enough. There was the door to the Institute and upstairs was the gentle-voiced Madame Chasseriau. Drawing his head as deeply between his shoulders as he could he ducked for this door, burst through, slammed it behind him, and raced upstairs.

Comfortably ensconced in a soft-cushioned chair and with a bottle of Bordeaux and a huge bowl of chocolate before him Dumas rested like Hannibal in Capua and regaled Madame Chasseriau with a lurid narrative of the day's happenings. Then he went away by the little gate in the rue Mazarine and returned home to change his shirt. It would be unfair to assert that Dumas was a coward for he gave many evidences of stout courage during his life. The truth was that he was a theoretical Republican with a decided aversion to violence although the spectacle of violence could always arouse the dramatic instinct in him. He could be as picturesque as anybody during a revolution, swashbuckle like a second Captain Boabdil, carry a gun, even fire it when he was behind a protecting lion, and venture into fairly dangerous ground; but when it came to rushing into the cannon's mouth

that was another matter. It took men like Arago, Cavaignac, and Charras to do that.

Dumas, installed in his rooms, had completed his toilet, washed the powder-stains from his face and hands, and draped himself in an elegant new shirt when he heard shouting in the rue de l'Université. Popping his head out the window he turned his eyes toward the Tuileries gardens and there he saw what seemed to be thousands of white pigeons turning over and over in the bright sunlight and fluttering toward the earth. These white pigeons were the correspondence of Napoléon, Louis XVIII and Charles X being scattered from the windows to the four winds of the earth. The Tuileries had been taken. The Revolution of 1830 was an accomplished fact. Henceforth July 29, 1830, would take its place among historical dates. Dumas put on his coat and made his way toward the quais. He passed the bronze lion with an affectionate glance, stepped carefully over the dead bodies that littered the Pont des Arts and attached himself to the long column of citizens who were pushing through the Tuileries gate. From the center pavilion floated the tricolor in place of the white standard of the Bourbons that had fluttered there for fifteen years.

The interior of the Tuileries presented a scene of indescribable confusion. The corridors and state chambers were crowded with a gesticulating, shouting mass of powder-blackened men and glittering-eyed women. They surged through the vast halls and rooms fingering everything, stopping to gape at the portraits, scraping their muddy feet on the heavy carpets, leaving dark stains on the woodwork and marks of blood on the balustrades of the stairs. Friend called to friend in triumph. On the throne of France a student with a bullet through his chest had been laid and his blood ran down the embroidered *fleurs de lys* and formed a pool on the dais. During the day more than ten thousand people were to sit upon this throne of Charles X and scream with laughter as they did so. The mob, its passions liberated, poured through the throne-room to the King's private study where the rifled secretaries stood with broken drawers and from there to the bed-room where unmentionable acts were performed on the King's great bed to the obscene shrieks of bystanders. The Salle des Maréchaux was a din of noise and thumping feet. A dozen students

were shooting at the portrait of the Duc de Raguse and balls had pierced the likeness through the head and the breast. Dumas, pushed along by the mob, was shoved into the library of the Duchesse de Berry and there, much to the gratification of his vanity, he discovered a copy of *Christine* bound in purple morocco and stamped with the arms of the Duchesse. He shoved it into his pocket without a word. Then he fought his way back toward the courtyard, stumbling through the congested mass of humanity and holding his breath against the odor of garlic and sour wine. Outside, a huge crowd gathered about four men dancing a cancan and cheered as the dancers kicked their dusty boots toward the hot sky. These terpsichorean artists were clad in the stolen garments of the Duchesse d'Angoulême and the Duchesse de Berry and Dumas watched woefully as a thousand-franc cashmere shawl was torn to tatters.

In the street both acquaintances and strangers were willing and eager to inform Dumas how the Tuileries had fallen. The four attacks were described to him. There had been one by the Palais-Royal, another by the rue des Poulies, a third by the Pont des Arts (which Dumas knew very well), and a fourth by the Pont Royal. It had been the second attack, led by Godefroy Cavaignac, Joubert and Bastide, that had captured the ancient building. Owing to a misinterpreted order on the part of the Royalists a regiment had been withdrawn from the defense before a second had come up to replace it and Cavaignac's insurgents observing the slackening fire had rushed through all the wicket gates and gratings and driven the Swiss Guards before them. In vain had the Duc de Raguse striven to rally the Royalist troops. The Swiss Guards still remembered the tenth of August, and, flinging their arms away, fled across the Place du Carrousel like rabbits. The Duc de Raguse, weeping with vexation, withdrew among the last of the defenders just as Joubert was planting the tricolor on the gate de l'Horloge. Well, it was over. The Revolution was accomplished. The fifteen years' comedy had ended with a bloody climax. While the ostensible leaders of Liberalism, Casimir Périer, Laffitte, Benjamin Constant, Sébastiani (he of the four gold snuff-boxes), Guizot and Odilon Barrot had hidden in the wings the Three Days Drama had been played by Cavaignac, Baude, Charras, Étienne Arago, Gauja, Bastide, Joubert, and those blood-stained men

of the people who knew little about arbitration but a deal about frontal attacks with muskets. It was the children of the proletariat who won the Revolution of 1830 only to have the victory slip through their fingers into the ambitious hands of Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans. The Three Days, then, were no more than a pathetic parody of 1789, for all it accomplished was the removal of the crown from a scrupulous but stupid old man and its transference to a more clever but less honest nobleman. After the bloodshed and the gallant deaths upon the barricades the rest was farcical. There was the meeting of the Liberal deputies at Laffitte's house, the appointment of the Marquis de la Fayette to the command of Paris, the last minute attempt of Charles X to forestall Destiny by revoking the ordinances and appointing the Mortemart-Gérard ministry, the negotiations with the canny Duc d'Orléans who still hid in Neuilly—negotiations which ended with Laffitte's impatient note bidding him to choose between a crown and a passport, and the establishment of the July Monarchy, that weak compromise engineered by Béranger and Laffitte. Béranger, the poet, had likened the Duc d'Orléans to a plank flung across a torrent; eighteen years later another poet, Lamartine, was to remove that plank.

The day following the capture of the Tuileries, Dumas, loitering about the Hôtel de Ville and listening to the conversation of La Fayette and his lieutenants, heard the old Marquis remark that Paris was suffering from a shortage of gunpowder and that if Charles X and his Royalist troops proposed to march on the city the situation would be precarious for the new government. Dumas instantly ceased to be the observing playwright and transformed himself into a hot-headed d'Artagnan. With that impulsiveness that was always a part of his nature he strode up to La Fayette and demanded leave to go to Soissons, capture the powder-magazine there, and bring back the ammunition. "You are crazy!" snorted the Hero of Two Worlds. He barely restrained a smile as he observed the tall young man in the vermilion gilet and pointed shoes. Dumas did not resent being called crazy by La Fayette. He continued to argue in a most persuasive manner, and, to get rid of him, the commander of the National Guard and military governor of Paris wrote out a request: "Permit

M. Alexandre Dumas access to General Gérard." There was nothing like turning crazy young men over to the General who would treat them with proper military despatch. Dumas took the request, left the Hotel de Ville, and, as soon as he was outside, forged above the Marquis's signature: "To whom we recommend the proposition he has just communicated to us." Then he proceeded blithely on his way to the office of General Gérard. The General heard Dumas's scheme for seizing the powder, started to shake his head smilingly, and then read La Fayette's note. The handwriting was only too familiar but the sense of it suggested that the old Marquis was going slightly mad. The idea of entrusting this young dandy with a commission in which he would probably get his crinkly head shot off! But there it was in plain writing. "To whom we recommend the proposition . . ." Well, if Dumas desired to die, die he should. General Gérard picked up his pen and signed the note Dumas had already written out for him: "The military authorities of the town of Soissons are ordered to deliver immediately to M. Alexandre Dumas all the powder that can be found either in the powder magazine or in the town."

"That is the last of that young man," he thought to himself as Dumas dashed out the door. In the street young d'Artagnan continued his forgeries, this time inserting above General Gérard's signature: "Minister for War." Then he returned to La Fayette. This time La Fayette thought General Gérard had gone mad. He chuckled a bit at the "Minister for War" and then wrote out a proclamation to the citizens of the town of Soissons requesting them to aid and abet M. Alexandre Dumas in his patriotic designs. Again Dumas hurriedly left the Hôtel de Ville. It was three o'clock in the afternoon and the fortified town of Soissons locked its gates at eleven o'clock. There were eight hours, then, in which to travel twenty-four leagues.

Loitering in the square before the Hôtel de Ville was a young painter named Bard, a friend to Dumas and a confirmed Republican. This youth—for he was only eighteen years old—was leaning against a wall and observing the world go by. Young d'Artagnan-Dumas ran up to him. "Come with me," he cried. "Where?" asked Bard, the specter of a fine meal at Véfour's floating before him. "To get yourself shot!" Bard immediately turned into Athos. "Hurrah!" he

shouted. *"Vive la République!"* There was a moment's stuttering conversation and Bard dashed off to Dumas's house to secure pistols and a horse. They were to meet at Le Bourget. Dumas scampered down the rue Saint-Martin, his cloak floating behind him. He traveled on foot to La Villette and there engaged a cabriolet to carry him to Le Bourget. There was no sign of Bard, so Dumas, to pass the time in an agreeably patriotic manner, rigged up a tricolor flag out of several yards of merino and a broom-stick. Hardly was this Republican gesture accomplished than Bard appeared riding furiously down the dusty road. The flag was nailed to the cabriolet and off for Les Mesnil the two heroes started, thrusting their heads out at opposite sides of the carriage and shouting, *"Vive la République!"* to the astonished country-folk. The first ten miles were covered in exactly an hour and the next two stations went practically as fast. The spectacle of this swaying and jouncing cabriolet carrying a tricolor flag on a broom-stick and with two tousled heads projecting on either side and bellowing *"Vive la République!"* was as comic as it was theatrical. Dispiritingly enough, it quite failed to rouse the slumbering patriotism of the plodding farmers who cared less about who was shooting who in the streets of Paris than whether or not it was going to rain the next day. At Nanteuil d'Artagnan-Dumas and Athos-Bard met with a decided set-back. A surly old postboy, who had been assigned them by a phlegmatic providence, doggedly refused to drive his bony horses faster than the regulation pace. He observed the tricolor with a sneer. He intimated that the two young men had escaped from some lunatic asylum. It was difficult to be a patriotic hero when the populace refused to recognize the dramatic gesture. Dumas, however, could rise to the occasion all by himself. First, he secured a switch and started to belabor the lean flanks of the horses unmercifully while the old postboy roared his disapproval and strove to hold back the far from snorting steeds. The switch broke and Dumas, disarmed for the moment, turned to Bard and shouted for his pistols. The old postboy grinned to himself and continued to rein in the horses. Bard, a trifle pale at the command, passed the pistols to Dumas and the postboy, deciding that the joke had gone far enough, halted the carriage, sullenly dismounted and began to unharness the horses. Dumas, flourishing his pistols, warned him to desist. The postboy

continued to unbuckle the leather straps. Then Dumas fired one of the pistols—it had a blank load in it—directly at the postboy's face and the victim—struck in the cheek by the wad—fell to the ground with a roar of anguish and surprise. He was convinced that he had been killed. Dumas hauled on the postboy's huge boots, leaped astride the saddle-horse, and the carriage started off at a great rate of speed.

Levignan was reached by half-past eight which left two and a half hours to cover the remaining nine leagues to Soissons. At Villers-Cotterets an ovation awaited the two travel-stained heroes. Old friends clustered about the carriage and hailed Dumas, among them Hutin, a boyhood acquaintance, who explained that he knew the gate-keeper at Soissons and could, therefore, enter the town at any time during the night. This was welcome news for Dumas and Bard, who, exhausted with their long ride from Paris, were only too willing to linger among the honey-pots of Villers-Cotterets adulation. The rue de Lormet and the rue de Soissons were the same. Nothing was changed except the dark young man who had gone away from this quiet backwater of Time seven years before. Dumas sat down to a steaming supper with a score of his youthful comrades, among them that Paillet who had ventured to Paris with him on the eventful first trip. It was charming to sit among the young men who had played prisoner's base with him in bygone times and listen to the gossip about familiar names. So many of the girls had married and so many of the youths had developed in unexpected ways. The same bright moon shone down on the meadows and the forest and in the park of François Premier the night-breeze rustled through the ancient beech trees.

Shortly after midnight Dumas, Bard and Hutin were before the walls of Soissons. Over the city floated the white banner of the Bourbons and from time to time the sound of a sentinel's steps could be heard crunching the gravelled walks. Soissons was royalist; its regiment had not mutinied; M. le Vicomte de Liniers, the military governor, had remained a faithful subject to Charles X. The fury of the Three Days had not reached the city. How three headstrong youths were to capture this stronghold was a problem to which not one of them had given any particular thought. Dumas's principle, as always,

was: act first and think afterwards. But they were there before the frowning bastions,—d'Artagnan-Dumas, Athos-Bard, and Aramis-Hutin. There was no Porthos. Hutin's friendly relations with the gate-keeper secured the trio an ingress to the city and the remainder of the night was passed in the house of Hutin's mother where the three young men manufactured a large tricolor flag from the red curtains of the dining-room, the blue curtains of the drawing-room and a sheet from the linen-press. It was proposed to raise this revolutionary symbol over the Cathedral in place of the white Bourbon standard and Bard and Hutin were deputed to this task. If the sacristan interfered, Dumas announced ferociously, he was to be flung from the top of the belfry. Bard looked at Hutin and Hutin looked at Bard but they made no remonstrance. After all, war was war.

Shortly after three o'clock in the morning Bard and Hutin departed with the huge flag for the Cathedral praying in their souls that the sacristan be either amenable or sound asleep. Dumas set off toward the fortified powder-magazine, lurked about until he saw the tricolor triumphantly flying from the belfry of the Cathedral, leaped the high wall, and found himself face to face with a captain and a sergeant who were lounging in the garden. He immediately cocked both triggers of his gun and stalked toward them with as ferocious a Republican scowl as he could summon up. He tried to look like a composite picture of Robespierre, Danton, and Marat. There was some parley and Dumas exhibited his letters from General Gérard and La Fayette. The soldiers, now joined by a perplexed colonel who had come out to see what the commotion was about, agreed to a benevolent neutrality—they were Republicans at heart anyway and only waited the opportunity to give signal proof of it—and Dumas, accompanied by several Soissons patriots who had appeared due to the industrious proselytizing of Hutin, marched off to the house of M. le Vicomte de Liniers.

The military governor, an obnoxiously aristocratic individual, lifted his eyebrows at the appearance of the travel-stained young man whose cravat was in ribbons, whose coat was black with travel and bereft of half its buttons, and whose trousers had been ripped by the rough wall he had scaled. He restrained a smile and in a voice of polite irony asked him what he wanted. Dumas presented his letters which

by this time had become somewhat soiled and rumpled. M. le Vicomte de Liniers snorted at the signature of Général Gérard, explained that it carried no legal significance for him, that he did not recognize the sovereignty of the Provisional Government, and that there was no powder in the magazine, anyway. Rebuffed at this first interview Dumas hurried out to the magazine, discovered that there were two hundred pounds of powder in it, learned to his relief that the garrison was preponderantly Republican in opinion and, therefore, not to be feared, and then returned to the military governor's house. There he found M. le Marquis de Lenferna, Lieutenant of Police, and M. Bonvilliers, Lieutenant-Colonel of Engineers, in consultation with M. le Vicomte de Liniers. Dumas presented his crumpled authorizations again; the remarks of the military governor grew more jeering; and, at last, his temper at a ragged edge, the young man snatched his pistols from his belt, cocked them, aimed them at the laughing officers who suddenly ceased to laugh, and, in a gutteral roaring voice, announced that if an order for the release of the powder were not signed in five seconds he would blow out their brains beginning with M. le Vicomte de Liniers. A side door opened and a dishevelled woman burst into the room crying, "My love! Yield! Yield! It is a second revolt of the negroes!" Dumas listened paralysed. The hysterical woman continued, "Yield, I implore you! Remember that my father and mother were both massacred in Santo Domingo!" Dumas understood, then, that his fuzzy hair, his burnt complexion, and the hoarseness of his voice had driven this woman—the wife of the military governor—into hysterics. M. le Vicomte de Liniers, after some formal objections, yielded and wrote out the order for the removal of the powder. D'Artagnan-Dumas put his pistols away with a sigh of relief, disregarded the delays of the Mayor of Soissons and had the doors of the magazine battered open, saw the barrels of powder loaded upon carts and driven out through the city gates followed by a cheering crowd, and prepared for his own departure. Forty-four hours after he had left the city with Bard he found himself again in the turmoil of Paris.

Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans, now Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom and in a few days to be Louis-Philippe, King of France,

welcomed the dark young man who appeared before him, extending his pale royal hand and murmuring, "Well done, Monsieur Dumas. You have executed your best drama." He did not explain that the barrels of gunpowder were quite unnecessary. Dumas blushed, bowed, and departed from the royal presence with a swelling chest. Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans smiled dryly to himself and muttered: "What a play-boy!"

# PART TWO

# MONTE CRISTO

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE TRIUMPH OF ANTONY

### I

The ardor of Dumas still responded to the martial music of revolution. He had conversed too familiarly with the leaders, with La Fayette, Godefroy Cavaignac, Étienne Arago, Charras, to return, at least for the moment, to his sedentary occupation of playright. The restlessness that was an integral part of his nature, that was to carry him over France and Switzerland and Italy, North Africa and Russia, aroused him to further militant endeavors. France was his stage and the young quadroon desired to tread it as prominently as possible. Literature was of secondary importance. The pitched battle of romanticism was to him three-quarters of the charm of being a romanticist. It gave him an opportunity to rise up in the orchestra and shout anathemas at turgid dramas, to applaud noisily those luxuriant plays that deliberately demolished the classical pedantries. He delighted in reading the grave rebukes administered to him by the journals whenever he had been particularly obnoxious in the theatre. An inborn spirit of exhibitionism animated his existence. The Revolution had given him ample scope for extravagant attitudes. The Three Days, the whirlwind expedition to Soissons, La Fayette's arms about him in the Hôtel de Ville, the Duc d'Orléans' ironical compliment on his best drama, all these unexpected gestures of a laughing Time Spirit urged him toward further fire-works. Gun in hand he joined the motley crowd of soldiers, revolutionists and curiosity-seekers who filled the roads to Rambouillet on August 3rd, an undisciplined, rag-tag-and-bobtail division pushed forward by canny politicians who hoped that this overt demonstration of offense would hasten the abdication and banishment of Charles X. The old monarch,

entrenched behind his troops at Rambouillet, heard the shouting of the mob, believed the false statement of Maréchal Maison that sixty thousand infuriated patriots were investing Rambouillet, and retreated. There was a dignity to Charles X that neither Louis XVIII, who preceded him, nor Louis-Philippe, who succeeded him, possessed. He was the last royal knight in France who perished because he was scrupulous in his tyranny. Dumas, camped before Rambouillet, felt like a hero of 1789.

Paris seemed dull after this last musical comedy scene. The waves of excitement that alternately rose and fell ceased to carry him on their crests. He regretted this, for he desired to play some part in the reconstruction of the government. Vague delusions of political grandeur blinded him to his incapacities and he conveniently forgot that his bravery led him only so far as the last protecting bronze lion. At Soissons, it was true, he had gone farther, but Soissons had been a set-piece, his blaze of glory, his best drama. He could be spectacular in bravery for a day, but for no longer. The temptation to loll in some Capua over a bowl of chocolate was too great. How then, could he manage the extended difficulties of a diplomat during a long period of stress? This was something he did not consider, and the possibilities of an ambassador's post, of a ministry, of a special commissioner's function spun through his unreflecting mind. He sought for some excuse to approach La Fayette with a proposal. Harel begged him to forget these designs and to settle down to work on a drama about Napoleon Bonaparte. Dumas scorned the suggestion. There was Spain. He might ask for a post in Spain. He had never seen the dark-skinned mountaineers riding on donkeys through mountain passes. How beautiful the feet of the Andalusian dancing girls must be! There was Austria. He could wear silk breeches at the court of Vienna and ride in a cabriolet to the battlefield of Wagram. There was Russia. He had heard all about the huge bears that ate men in the icy gloom of the Ukrainian forests and the howling wolves that pursued sleighs along the snow-covered steppes. A modicum of common sense, however, restrained him from putting forward these proposals to the old Marquis de la Fayette, and when he did accost him at the Hôtel de Ville on August fifth it was not to request an ambassadorship (La Fayette thought he had come to beg a prefecture!)

DUMAS IN 1832

*He was once more on the bright crest of the wave of romanticism*

DELPHINE GAY
*The Parisian literary world called her the tenth muse*

LOUISE DESPREAUX
*The "page" of* Henri III et sa çour

but to urge that he be appointed special commissioner to travel through La Vendée and discover the possibilities of organizing a National Guard in that admittedly Royalist territory. La Fayette was curious to know how Dumas would go about any such task. "Have you thought about it?" he inquired. Dumas replied: "As much as I am capable of reflecting on any subject. I am a man of impulses and not given to reflection." La Fayette subdued a smile and told him to go ahead. At least, the young man could do no harm and La Fayette was relieved that he had not asked for the Ambassador's post at Vienna. After receiving the letter authorizing him to travel as Special Commissioner through the departments of La Vendée, the Loire-Inférieure, Morbihan and Maine-et-Loire, Dumas paused at the door.

"General," he said.

La Fayette turned.

"Do you authorize me to wear some sort of uniform?"

La Fayette stifled a snort of laughter and nodded.

"Have something made resembling an aide-de-camp's uniform," he replied.

The young man did not have to go far before he found his uniform. While crossing the Place du Carrousel he met a friend named Léon Pillet. Pillet was clad in a shako with flowing tricolored plumes, silver epaulettes, a silver belt, and a royal blue coat with trousers to match. Down the trousers ran beautiful glistening silver stripes. Dumas stopped with his mouth open and drank in this astonishing picture of flamboyant glory. It made the bird-of-paradise look like a crow.

Dumas set out for La Vendée on the tenth of August clad in an exact duplicate of Léon Pillet's uniform. On the same day Monseigneur le Duc d'Orléans ascended the throne of France as Louis-Philippe.

La Vendée was the disputed land. In its dark forest ferocious battles had taken place between Royalists and Revolutionists during the great upheaval of 1789. One has but to read Victor Hugo's *Quatre-Vingt-Treize* to understand what happened in that terrain of sullen peasants who lurked in chasms and forests and caves and tore to bits the troops of the Directory. It was the last stronghold of royalism in

France, the desperate remnant of an uncompromising feudalism. Dumas, setting forth with the sublime confidence that was a part of his strength, had not the slightest notion as to the proper method of approaching these people, nor did he know what to do about the formation of a National Guard. Clad in his glittering uniform he passed through Blois, Tours and Angers. At the last named *ville* the Assizes were in session and Dumas paused long enough to attend them. A Vendeen peasant, under arrest for passing counterfeit coin, enlisted his sympathy and he despatched a letter to M. Oudard begging clemency for the criminal. Receiving a favorable reply he proceeded to Meurs, Beaulieu, Baumont and Chemillé. Already he noticed the increasing antagonism aroused by his uniform. Near Paris it had been all right but the farther he travelled from Paris the less did this uniform seem to appeal to the populace. Comprehending that discretion was the greater part of valor and that it is as fatal to wave a Republican uniform before a Royalist as it is to wave a red rag before a bull he reluctantly divested himself of his stripes and epaulets and donned less noticeable garments. Accompanied by the grateful counterfeiter he proceeded on his way, picking up a deal of information about La Vendée but doing nothing at all about his mission. He stopped at La Jarrie long enough to see Mélanie Waldor, and after six weeks of desultory journeying, returned to Paris with the bright news that new roads should be opened up through Le Bocage.

Paris had not adjusted itself to the new King and Dumas was intensely disgusted to observe Louis-Philippe shaking hands right and left to ingratiate himself with the populace. It did not seem kingly to the young man who could breathe fiery Republican sentiments one minute and sigh for the vanished glories of imperialism the next. He waited impatiently for his summons to an audience and when it did come he approached Louis-Philippe in such an arrogant manner that the new ruler was both amused and vexed. He was still further vexed when Dumas, assuming a political sagacity that was ridiculous, ventured to advise the future foreign policy of France. Louis-Philippe nearly choked. "Politics, M. Dumas," he spluttered, "you had better leave to Kings and Ministers. You are a poet; stick to your poetry."

Dumas made a deep bow and remarked: "Sire, the ancients called the poet a prophet." Louis-Philippe impatiently signified that the audience was over and an injured and humiliated young man left the chamber. In an outer office he murmured to M. Oudard that his rupture with the King was now complete. M. Oudard hid a smile and said nothing. The truth was that Dumas had lost his head. Because of the commission to La Vendée he now regarded himself as a political expert, a rank which he was far from deserving. He was too emotional for politics. As he had admitted to La Fayette, he was a man of instinct and not of reflection. He proved it by rushing home and writing out a resignation of his post at the Palais-Royal. He washed his hands of Louis-Philippe.

On the evening after his interview with the King, Dumas attended the première of *La Mère et la Fille* and then went to supper at Harel's house. The food was excellent and the wine was rare. Dumas expanded and told and retold the incident of his brush with Louis-Philippe, embroidering it, one may be sure. "That rascal Harel" nodded and smiled, and winked at Mademoiselle Georges. When the guests had departed Harel stayed Dumas, who was reaching for his cloak, and said: "Wait. I want to show you something." He led the unsuspecting playwright to a charming bed-sitting room with an adjoining dressing room. "Very nice," murmured Dumas, thinking of his own bed in the rue de l'Université and of Mélanie S., "a delightful place to work in." "I'm glad you think so," replied Harel, "for here you stay until you finish that play on Napoleon." Dumas looked amazed, enraged and then amused. "No foolish tricks now!" he exclaimed. Harel shrugged his shoulders. Dumas looked about the charming room. "I haven't the faintest plan for your 'Napoleon'," he complained. Harel waved a hand toward a row of books. "Bourrienne, Norvins, *Victoires et Conquêtes, Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène* . . ." "But my mistress," expostulated the playwright. At that moment Mademoiselle Georges entered the chamber. "I have sent her a bracelet," murmured the canny Harel. Dumas continued to observe the queenly form of Georges and sighed. "Very well," he said. "Tomorrow I will set to work and you shall have your play in a week."

"You are in a great hurry to leave us," remarked Mademoiselle Georges.

"It is Harel who is in a hurry . . . not I."

Georges smiled. "Harel will wait," she said.

Mademoiselle Georges was installed in the room next to that occupied by Dumas and it was only through her chamber that he could leave the house. He manifested no desire to escape. In nine days Dumas had written a play in twenty-four scenes and nine thousand lines which carried Napoleon from his first victory at Toulon to the melancholy Island of St. Helena. At the end of his gentle incarceration Dumas learned that his *Antony* had been released by the Censor for production at the Théatre-Français. If the political scene was not opening propitiously before him, at least he could not complain about the dramatic one.

His fury with Louis-Philippe had not subsided, and no sooner was he freed from the labor of *Napoleon* than he joined an artillery regiment of the National Guard which was being formed by his Republican friends. He discovered, to his joy, that the uniform he had worn through a part of La Vendée would, with minor changes, serve as an artilleryman's uniform. Before 1830 came to its momentous end he had been promoted to a Captaincy in the Fourth Battery called La Meurtrière, not because of its bloodthirsty proclivities but because it contained a large number of doctors. He strutted about with infinite satisfaction. And then the Demon of Comedy dealt him another blow. He attended the New Year's reception of the King in the Palais-Royal in full uniform. He was a little surprised to discover no men in artillery facings present and still further amazed to observe the astonished looks upon the faces of his friends. When he reached the King, Louis-Philippe looked him over and chuckled. *"Bon jour,* Dumas," he said, *"je vous reconnais bien là."* Everybody burst into laughter. Dumas, possessing not the slightest notion of what they were laughing at, proceeded to smile haughtily and strutted into the next room. There a willing colleague explained to him that the artillery regiment of the National Guard had been disbanded the day before by Royal decree. The notice had appeared in the *Moniteur* and Dumas had failed to see it. An indignant and flushed young man hastily left the Palais-Royal and fled to the rue de l'Université.

*Napoléon* was produced at the Odéon theater on January 10, 1831, and obtained a fair amount of success. But it was a bad play and Dumas knew it, a long picaresque exhibition which depended purely upon the unrest of the time and the political significance of the principal character. Frédéric Lemaître as the Emperor was admirable, and Dumas admitted that it was the actor who made the drama. Setting no store by his handiwork, the playwright's sensitive nature was not unduly lacerated by the pointed criticisms of some of his friends. It was an episode, a nine days' labor, a friendly gesture for Harel, and already Dumas was meditating other and more important things.

## II

The rehearsals of *Antony* at the Théatre-Français proceeded in the most disappointing manner and Dumas began to realize that the national home of drama was to him at least one of those lower circles of Hell that Dante had omitted from his *Divina Commedia.* Somewhere in the depths of Hades existed a place where unfortunate playwrights were eternally tortured by arrogant actors at endless rehearsals. It was based directly on the Théâtre-Français. The imagination of Satan could never have envisaged it. Faced as he was by a group of spoiled players who overrode the dramatist and drove directors to the verge of insanity, Dumas found the situation more than he could dominate. The trouble lay with the principals, with Mademoiselle Mars and Firmin. Mars, particularly, was a maddening irritation to him. She was an idol of the public and she made the most of her exalted rank, haughtily preëmpting to herself the rôles of principal player, director and playwright. There were moments when Dumas was uncertain whether he or she had written *Antony.* Mars, however, was sure that she had not written it. She despised *Antony.* She was quite incapable of understanding the entirely modern character of Adèle. Though she possessed wit, intelligence, coquetry and elocutionary ability, she lacked the naturalism, the *tameness* that was necessary to render the character of Adèle plausible. She had been bred in a different school of drama. Firmin, for his part, was unable to grasp the *tone* of Antony. It was impossible for this semi-classical player whose leg ached for the solemn buskin to reproduce the bitter

irony and fiery passion of the Byronic lover. The rehearsals, then, proceeded to constant complaints and interruptions from these privileged players. Dumas, hurrying from the satisfactory rehearsals of *Napoléon* where everybody was pleased with his or her part, found himself in a maelstrom of dissatisfaction. Mars was ripping to pieces the part of Adèle. Firmin plucked all the color from the rôle of Antony. By the end of a month the drama was but the pale shadow of itself, and the distracted author, whose very life was imbedded in this play, realized that his work had been ruined completely. He could endure the situation no longer.

Victor Hugo, who had completed arrangements for the production of his *Marion Delorme* at the Porte-Saint-Martin theater, came to Dumas, shook his head lugubriously and admitted that there was no hope in the Théâtre-Français. No matter what they did the Romantic playwrights would be regarded as usurpers in the chilly auditorium of Racine and Corneille. The flame of *Hernani* had not ignited the sombre walls of the national theater. Dumas, in despair over his rehearsals, agreed with him. "Come over to the Porte-Saint-Martin," suggested Hugo, "I have already negotiated for you with the manager, Crosnier, and he is quite willing." Dumas shook his head. "I have but two plays," he answered, "and both of them are in rehearsal, one at the Odéon and the other—what is left of it—at the Théâtre-Français." Nevertheless the prospect of joining Hugo at the Porte-Saint-Martin appealed to him, and he reserved the suggestion for further thought.

The première of *Antony* drew near and Dumas listened ruefully to the remnant of his play. It might as well have been a one-act curtain-raiser as this pale imitation of a Gymnase drama. On the Wednesday prior to the first night—it was arranged for Saturday—Firmin beckoned Dumas aside. The playwright followed him. What now? Was it proposed to cut out the second and third acts? Firmin said, "My dear friend," and smiled. Dumas did not smile. Firmin proceeded: "I do not want to refuse to act the part of Antony for you, first, because I will play all the parts you assign me; secondly, because having given me the rôle of Saint-Mégrin, which is a good one, you acquired the right to give me a bad one after it. . . ." He stopped in confusion. Dumas waited. If the fellow would only leave

off his damnable faces and begin! A series of questions brought out Firmin's conviction that *Antony* would be a dismal failure unless his suggestion were followed. "Well?" inquired Dumas. Firmin hesitated and stuttered. "If I were in your place," he said at last, "I would take it to Scribe." Scribe! A red aura seemed to surround Dumas for a moment. Scribe of the popular vaudevilles! He walked over to the prompter and said: "Garnier, please give me my manuscript." The much-pencilled script was handed to him and Dumas walked toward the door. Mademoiselle Mars, who had been hovering in the wings stopped him. "I do not intend to act my part in your play on Saturday," she announced. Dumas lifted his eyebrows. "I have spent fifteen hundred francs on my dresses and wish them to be seen," she continued. Dumas almost smiled. "But why can they not be seen on Saturday as well as on any other day," he inquired politely. "Because," said Mars, "we have been promised a new chandelier for Saturday and now the man has put us off for another three months. When there is another chandelier I will play in your . . . piece." "No, you won't," answered Dumas. "In three months my . . . piece will have been acted at the Porte-Saint-Martin. *Adieu,* madame. *Au revoir,* Firmin." He walked solemnly out of the Théâtre-Français.

Well, it was done. He had ascended from Malebolge and the air was pleasant in the rue de Richelieu. For an instant he paused in the street gazing at the bullet marks on the stone façades of the houses. Then he turned and walked hurriedly toward the Boulevard Saint-Martin where Madame Dorval lived. He had not seen the little Dorval since Alfred de Vigny. . . . Dorval was the *deus ex machina* at the Porte Saint-Martin theater. She welcomed Dumas somewhat nervously, explaining that she was renewing her virginity. "Impossible!" roared Dumas. "It is true," she insisted, "I am becoming respectable." "Who the devil caused this to come about?" asked the playwright. "Alfred de Vigny," explained Dorval. "I am mad about him. And I have married Merle in order to keep *him* away from me." Dumas explained that he had come on business. That night he read *Antony* to her, took over the complacent Merle's room for a study and restored his last act to its original form. The next day he read the drama to Crosnier who fell asleep during the reading, thereby proving himself the perfect producer. *Antony* was accepted

by the Porte-Saint-Martin at once, although its première was deferred until May. The die was cast. Dumas's break with the Théâtre-Français was so complete that he imagined he would never go back there. Dorval was delightful. Bocage suggested the part of Antony to perfection. Alfred de Vigny, perhaps because of the little Dorval, was eager to offer advice and actual assistance in the revision of the script. Dumas resumed his jaunty airs and the cafés resounded to his uproarious laughter, his unceasing fund of anecdotes, his declamations, and his boastfulness.

Outside the theater the world of Paris reacted on Dumas in diverse ways. He had relinquished his hope of immediate political preferment but the flamboyant gestures of the opposition still drew him as a bright flame draws a fascinated moth, and his Republican sentiments continued to plunge him into precarious situations. He scorned Louis-Philippe. The king had humiliated him. He had expected much and received nothing. He was uneasily aware that Louis-Philippe laughed at him, regarding him as a sentimental and dramatically minded buffoon. For his own part, Dumas was very sure that the new ruler was a Janus-faced opportunist, who extended the hypocritical hand of friendship in public but conceived sly, tyrannical measures behind the safe walls of the Tuileries. Dumas could not forget the spectacle of the perspiring would-be monarch shaking hands with the grimy populace in the courts of the Palais-Royal during the days of uncertainty. Then, too, the memory of his *faux pas* at the New Year's reception still rankled in Dumas's mind. Therefore, the opposition disturbances that aroused the streets and cafés of Paris to turbulent activities appealed to him and he frequented those gatherings where the young Republicans, furious at the tame finale of the Revolution and the "Democratic" King who had been foisted on them, planned drastic measures to advance the cause of liberty. Nevertheless Dumas still played safe. At one banquet where the toasts steadily grew more revolutionary and where one young hothead flourishing a knife shouted "To Louis-Philippe!" the startled playwright leaped out a window and ran for home at full speed. When Louis-Philippe, bowing pusillanimously to the Republican opinion of Paris, ordered the *fleurs de lys* obliterated from the Royal carriages, Dumas, emo-

tionally reversing his dogmatic Republicanism, gave vent to a scorn that knew no bounds. To his imaginative soul the *fleurs de lys* were the symbols of the past glories of France, of the splendors of Valois conquest and the regalities of Bourbon majesty. He forgot how a mist had swirled before his eyes at the first glimpse of the tricolor flying from the towers of Notre-Dame during the Three Days, or, if he did remember that moment, he managed to merge the two sentiments by some method of logic peculiar to himself. Louis-Philippe was a knave. He feared to be a ruler and he was incapable of comprehending a disinterested democracy. Dumas, in his rage at the King's cowardice, sent in a second resignation, this time announcing in a longer and wordier message that the man of letters was but a prelude to the politician and that by the time he was thirty he was confident of being nominated a deputy. He was twenty-eight when he made this unfortunate prophecy. The Palais-Royal accepted his resignation calmly. This added to Dumas's fury. He continued to estrange himself from the government whose front and head had made life possible for him during his first year in Paris. When the trouble arose over the July Crosses (decorations awarded to those citizens who had taken a militant part in the Three Days insurrection and which Louis-Philippe desired to have inscribed as "given by the King of the French") Dumas accepted an appointment to the Committee of Fourteen elected from the various arrondissements to repudiate this inscription. Was not Louis-Philippe hiding in Neuilly when the Tuileries was taken by Cavaignac, Bastide and Joubert? Was not the cross a gift from the nation, from the grateful French people, and not an award from the King? The joy of Dumas was excessive when the Government acceded to a modification of the inscription. The Laffitte ministry fell, Casimir Périer's cabinet was created, and still Dumas fulminated against the government. The Palais-Royal, if it noticed him at all, viewed him with a half smile. He was to them an amusing quadroon, a thankless fellow with some talent, and an irritating individual.

Aside from politics and the dramatic opportunities they offered and the satisfactory progress of the rehearsals of *Antony* at the Porte-Saint-Martin theater, Dumas had Mélanie S. to comfort him. He had been revelling in her charms for some time, to the entire neglect

of that other Mélanie who was comforting herself as best she could by writing poetry and achieving the position of a blue-stocking in the Parisian salons to which she had returned from La Jarrie. On March 7, 1831, two days before the ghost-like Paganini gave his opening concert in Paris, Mélanie S. gave birth to a child, a daughter who was named Marie-Alexandre. Dumas, as usual, was delighted. The illegitimacy of his offspring—and Marie-Alexandre was not to be the last—aroused no moralistic qualms. He was as devoid of such compunctions as a rabbit. He bellowed with joy over his children, despatched a thousand kisses to the mothers, and turned back to his Gargantuan labors in letters.

May 3, 1831. Théophile Gautier has described the agitation, the tumult, the effervescence about the Porte-Saint-Martin theater on the opening night of *Antony*. It was a second *Hernani,* another battle against classical influences and, this time, a sudden blow in defence of modernity in the theater. A multitude of carriages slewed to the curb and from them descended an extraordinary mélange of human beings. There were strange and barbarous faces, great curling mustaches and pointed beards (the romanticists entertained a weakness for hirsute adornment upon the head, upper-lip and chin), long hair worn in the Merovingian style or cut like a square brush, extravagant doublets, cloaks with huge velvet lapels and hats of every style except the usual style of the day. The women stepped from their carriages apparelled in the mode of the hour, their hair arranged *à la girafe,* tall tortoise-shell combs thrusting upward like cocks' combs. Their mutton-leg sleeves brushed against the tittering bystanders and their short skirts, gathered up by gloved hands, revealed their high buskins. Time after time the gaping onlookers parted to permit the passage of some young master already celebrated, a poet, novelist or painter who threaded the mob waving his hand to his friends and flinging his huge cloak about him in true Hernani fashion as he swept through the portico. Inside the auditorium Dumas scurried about in a long green redingote buttoned from top to bottom. He understood that he must recover a standing established by *Henri III et sa Cour,* weakened by the semi-success of *Christine,* and almost destroyed by the mediocre *Napoléon. Antony,* then, was his desperate

bid for the adulation that had ceased and upon which he thrived. He had deliberately flung away his connection with the Palais-Royal in a moment of pique. There were two children for whom he must provide and several women, including his feeble mother. He was sybaritic in his tastes and demanded all the luxuries of life. *Antony* was an ultimate gamble by which he hoped to secure his crumbling fortunes. But would it? He glanced about the stage. There was not a single new carpet or decoration, not even a renovated *salon*. Crosnier had provided nothing but the actors. Dumas remembered the elaborate *mise-en-scène* of *Henri III et sa Cour* and sighed. It all depended on the play itself and two actors, the little Dorval and the romantic Bocage. The playwright returned to the auditorium and sank into a chair. He saw Mélanie Waldor's dark face turned toward him from a distant box.

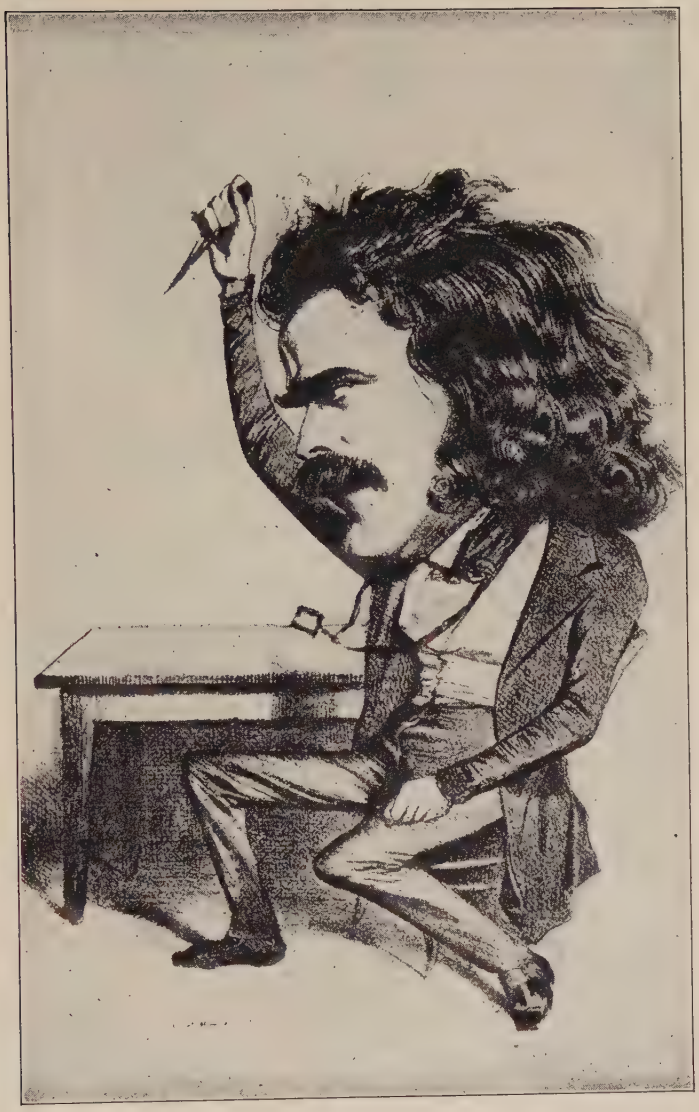
The curtain rose.

During the opening scenes Dorval's harsh voice, sloping shoulders and peculiar gestures alienated a portion of the audience; they could see no more in her than a vulgar little actress who might well be playing on the outer boulevards. There was no passion, no fire and the spectators did not suspect what was in store for them. Bocage, as the fainting Antony injured by a carriage, was carried in. As he fainted a second time murmuring, "And now I shall remain, shall I not?" the audience began to realize the theme and its possibilities. Adèle was married. Antony loved her. He would pursue her to the end. The curtain fell to moderate applause and Dumas hurried behind the scenes to hasten the change of act. Within five minutes, before the scattering applause had ceased, the curtain rose again. This act belonged to Bocage. He was a figure of bitter misanthropy and amorous threats, a man who knew neither his father nor his mother but realized all too well that he loved and that his love was married to another. Another! *"Malédiction!"* roared Antony to the pale and trembling Adèle, *"Oh! si vous saviez combien le malheur rend méchant! combien de fois, en pensant à cet homme, je me suis endormi la main sur mon poignard! . . . et j'ai rêvé de Grève et d'échafaud!"* Mélanie Waldor leaned back in her box, her heart beating violently. Dumas had once hissed such words into her willing ear. But now another Mélanie, Bell Krebsamer, still pale from her

confinement, sat proudly in the author's box. The second act ended to a roar of applause from the audience. They had recognized themselves at last in these emotional puppets dressed in the fashion of 1831. The melodramatic excesses of *Antony,* the over-ranting rôle of Bocage and the febrile helplessnes of Adèle as Madame Dorval created her could not dam the rising enthusiasm of the spectators. The curtain lifted on the third act while the auditorium still manifested its approval.

This act, the crucial one, was brutal action from beginning to end. Dumas himself compared it to the third act of *Henri III et sa Cour* where the Duc de Guise crushes his wife's arm in his iron gauntlet. The scene was an inn and to it comes Antony in pursuit of Adèle. He seizes all the post-horses in order to force Adèle to stop there, engages one of the two rooms, withdraws to it and waits for the arrival of the woman he loves. Adèle, who is fleeing to her husband from the influence of Antony, arrives and disappears into her bedroom. A pane of glass falls with a crash from the balcony door, a hand appears through the opening and unlatches that door. It opens and as Adèle, hearing the noise, reappears upon the stage, Antony, pale and determined, stands before her. To the audience of 1831 the ensuing scene was terrific realism. Adèle screams; Antony forces a handkerchief over her mouth and drags her toward the bedroom; the curtain falls. There was a moment of shocked and breathless silence after this climax and then an indescribable fury of applause burst from the audience. They clapped and screamed for five minutes. Dumas raced behind the scenes and congratulated his two players. Then he hurried out to the corridor and meeting Alexandre Bixio there seized him by the arm and dragged him to the street. The two men walked toward the Place de la Bastille chattering and laughing, Dumas, full of his success, acting like "a great lunatic." The cool air of Paris restored his sanity and he returned to the theater in time for the better part of the fourth act.

In this act a defence of the modern style of drama had been inserted (Madame Dorval humorously referred to it as *"le feuilleton"*) and the long speech was warmly received by the romanticists, their Merovingian coiffures waving approbation. Adèle is insulted by a jealous woman; she is discovered in Antony's arms by the Vicomtesse de



BOCAGE
*in the role of Antony*

MADAME DORVAL

*She entered the life of Dumas by way of a cab*

Lacy; she disappears filled with anguish; Antony's servant enters with the disturbing news that Adèle's husband has returned, and Antony dashes from the stage, crying, "Wretch! Will I arrive in time!" Dumas, acute psychologist of audiences as he was, raced behind the scenes, and cried to the scene shifters: "A hundred francs if the curtain be raised again before the applause subsides!" In two minutes the curtain rose on the last act. This scene is built entirely for one last line, a line that became a part of the popular language of Paris for twenty years. The two lovers are caught in the room; the husband is beating at the door; Adèle prefers death to dishonor; Antony stabs her to the heart, and flinging the poignard at the feet of the outraged husband who has broken his way in, exclaims: *"Elle me résistait; je l'ai assassiné!"* It is impossible to describe the state of the audience at this unexpected termination. Cries of dismay, loud laments and shouts mingled with the roar of applauding hands. Dumas, caught in one of the passages, had the skirts of his long green redingote torn to shreds by a crowd of young men. Behind the scenes the players were stupefied by the success. Crosnier was hidden. Dorval was mad with joy. Bocage was walking in circles. Mélanie Waldor, the tears streaming from her eyes, left the theater alone. The gasping figure of Alfred de Musset staggered along the hall.

Dumas had recovered everything he had lost. The play ran one hundred and thirty nights, an inconceivable success in the eighteen thirties.

There were good reasons for this astonishing triumph. *Antony* was the first romantic drama in modern dress. It was the first modern drama, the first play "of the times," the first complete cleavage with past traditions. There had been many ancient adulteries on the Parisian stages but never a modern one in which the sinners might be recognized as people who lived around the corner. The effect upon the young romanticists of the day was tremendous. It became the fashion for young bloods to walk about Paris with an Antony dagger in their belts, upon it the device: *"Adesso e sempre."* The famous Abbé de Lamennais invited Dumas to call on him in the rue Jacob. *Antony* spread through the provinces and was played as far south as Marseilles. The culminating speech of the drama was upon everyone's lips. Dumas accepted the new honors that were showered upon

him with his usual disarming vanity. Paris lay at his feet. Once more the thousand franc notes rolled in. Again there were elaborate dinners and loud waistcoats and beautiful women. Dumas began to fill out. The lean d'Artagnan had ceased to exist and the first suggestion of Monte Cristo appeared in that hero's place.

## III

A May of adulation melted into a June of triumph, and Dumas, bitten again by that unceasing desire to write poetical dramas as fine as those of Hugo, remembered that he had promised Harel a play for the Odéon. It was to be about Charles VII. He could not write in the whirl and heat of Paris, but before he removed himself to some quiet spot, there were several adjustments to make. He removed to a new house in the Square d'Orléans where he occupied a comfortable third floor and had as neighbor Étienne Arago. He traveled to Passy and visited Marie-Catherine and Alexandre *fils* and acknowledged his seven-year-old son whom he placed in the École Vauthier in the rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève. He saw Mélanie Waldor several times and discovered that she held no grievance against him but still loved him and wrote poetry about him. A cool friendship established itself upon the still smoking ruins of the old love affair. He acknowledged his daughter, Marie-Alexandre. He purchased new gilets of remarkable hues, elaborate walking sticks, pointed boots and flowing capes. He continued to revel in the plump beauty of Mélanie S.

On the sixth of July, accompanied by her, he traveled by diligence to Rouen where he remained twenty-four hours exploring the ancient town in which Jeanne d'Arc had perished in the flames. From there he went by boat to Le Havre, renewing again his delight in the sea which had so enchanted him while he was revising *Christine*. But Le Havre, with its busy population, was not a place where he could settle down with any comfort for a period of six weeks' labor and he looked about for a quiet town in the vicinity. He finally discovered Trouville, then a small fishing village containing a solitary inn. A day or two later he was settled there in Madame Oseraie's hostelry in a pleasant chamber that opened on the Vallée de la Touque in one direction and on the sea in the other. The days passed quietly.

Dumas and Mélanie S., much like a young couple on honeymoon, strolled on the white sand of the beach, bathed in the clear blue-green water, angled from small boats, and conversed with the brown-skinned fishermen. The air was clear and salty. Dumas, his mind at peace, began to write his fourth full length play. He sat in his chamber and calmly appropriated what he desired from the many dramatists he had studied. The result was an astounding *pastiche*. It is easy to perceive what the playwright wanted to accomplish. He desired to write a major poetical play, but he was unequal to the task. When he cut himself away from swiftly moving melodrama or colloquial comedy and strove for the grand manner he was lost. He did not possess the exalted imagination, the intellectual power or the literary *finesse*. All he could do was to fall back on models. Because of this creative weakness *Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux* became no more than a ponderous rag carpet of borrowed beauties. Even the central idea of the drama, a contrast between nomadic Islam and feudal Christianity, was suggested by Gérard de Nerval's unpublished *La Dame de Carouge,* which Dumas had read some time before. In effect Dumas was rearing an imposing and hollow structure with stones deliberately taken from the edifices of better men.

One day a young banker named Beudin called on Dumas and introduced himself as one of the authors of the boulevard success, *Trente ans, ou la vie d'un jouer*. Together with the schoolmaster Prosper-Parfait Goubaux, Beudin formed that half of the collaboration called Dinaux, the other half being Victor Ducange alone. Dumas had not talked long with the young man before he discovered that Beudin had an idea for a play and wanted assistance. The idea, which formed no more than a prologue to an uncreated plot, had been found by Beudin in Sir Walter Scott's *Chronicles of the Canongate,* and Dumas, listening to the young man's enthusiastic description, saw possibilities in the theme. He agreed to collaborate with Beudin and Goubaux on this drama, to be called *Richard Darlington,* as soon as he had finished with *Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux*. The agreement was made by Dumas on his twenty-ninth birthday, July 24, 1831, and on the tenth of August he wrote the final speech of *Charles VIII chez ses grands vassaux*. There was nothing to keep him in Trouville now and, packing his effects, he proceeded back to Paris, to

which city Beudin, eager to break the good news to Goubaux, had preceded him. Dumas arrived in the capital too late for the première of Victor Hugo's *Marion Delorme,* which had taken place on August eleventh, but he went to a representation on the evening of his return and there Antoine Fontaney, the poet and lover of Madame Dorval's niece, saw him, *"le grand Dumas, toujours fou, toujours excellent, parlant, criant à toute la salle."*

*Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux* was presented for the first time at the Odéon on the evening of October 20, 1831. Mélanie Waldor, clad in a bright red robe, sat in a box and watched her lost lover's drama go down to a complete defeat under the boohs of the audience.

Dumas himself had suspected the débâcle. Before the production he had displayed uncertainty about his verse and almost decided to rewrite the play in prose. The resounding lines of Victor Hugo's *Marion Delorme* had made him uneasy and had awakened a consciousness of his own feebleness in this métier. He had also returned Harel's thousand franc premium after he had read the drama before a group of friends who received it coldly. But the official reading before the Odéon players went well and Dumas's vanity recovered from the chilly winds of criticism. Mademoiselle Georges was assigned the part of Bérengère and the rôles of Savoisy, Yaquob, Charles VII and Agnès Sorel were distributed respectively to Ligier, Lockroy, Delafosse and Mademoiselle Noblet. Rehearsals proceeded and Dumas, hearing his verses rolled forth by experienced mimes, built up in his own mind a defence of his poetry. To the last he possessed no self-criticism.

Two incidents marked the opening night of *Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux.*

The armor worn by Delafosse who played the rôle of Charles VII had been borrowed from a museum and its springs were extremely rusty. During one of his long speeches the visor fell on the helmet and Charles VII was promptly extinguished, nothing but an indistinct mumbling issuing from the invisible head. The audience began to titter. Charles VII's esquire, being something of a mechanician, rushed forward and pried the visor up with his poignard, revealing the countenance of Delafosse as red as a peony and furious with

humiliation. Dumas remarked later in recalling this incident, "With a visor like that, Henri II would not have died at the hand of Montgomery. Observe on what the fate of empires may hang. Henri II was killed because his visor went up; Charles VII came near to being killed because his visor fell!" Visor or no visor, however, *Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux* was as good as dead.

Dumas, leading Alexandre *fils* by the hand, departed from the Odéon theater where the five acts of his drama had been played to a silent audience. Father and son walked along slowly without speaking, and the small boy sensed the sadness of the man beside him. Something had happened. Something that stilled the irrepressible gaiety of his father. They passed by the old blank wall of the rue de Seine, near the Institute, and Dumas continued to maintain a profound silence. The little boy was forced into a trot to keep up with the long strides of the dejected playwright. The bright moonlight flung their shadows before them, flickering black skeletons, one of them long and grotesque and the other short and fantastic. Around them breathed the vast sprawling city, its bright eyes winked out as the lamps were extinguished. Dumas turned in at his door in the Square d'Orléans and climbed slowly to his chamber of the third floor. The glory of Antony had departed and in its place was the flatness of Charles VII. Years later, in the preface to his play *Le Fils Naturel,* Alexandre Dumas *fils,* remembering the sad journey homeward from the Odéon, wrote: "I have never returned from one of my most applauded and clamorous first nights without recalling that large cold theater and that silent walk through the deserted streets; and, when my friends were felicitating me, I have thought to myself: it is possible, but I would rather have written *Charles VII* which did not succeed." There was more loving loyalty than reason in this assertion.

The ebullience of Dumas could not be stifled by failure and already, even before the débâcle of his attempt at tragic verse, he was at work on *Richard Darlington* with Beudin and Goubaux. Like Antaeus he fell to earth only to rise the stronger. Failure might crush him for a moment, an evening perhaps, but new vistas and fresh oppor-

tunities constantly opened before him. He strode toward them with renewed roars of laughter.

In *Richard Darlington* he possessed a theme that fitted his peculiarly forceful ingenuity. Within three weeks of the première of *Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux* he, with the collaboration of Beudin and Goubaux, had finished the play, turned it over to Harel, who had deserted the management of the Odéon theater for that of the Porte-Saint-Martin, and was watching the first rehearsals. *Antony* had been a tragedy, a melodrama rather, of extreme egoism in love; *Richard Darlington* was an exposition of egoism in ambition. Richard, a foundling sheltered and educated by the good Doctor Grey and his wife, marries Jenny, the Doctor's daughter, in order to gain influence in the town of Darlington. He is elected Member of Parliament. Reaching London his ambition pushes him into a skyrocket career and he achieves a Minister's portfolio. He finds it necessary to rid himself of his wife in order to make a more aristocratic connection and the murder of Jenny occasions Richard's downfall and the climax of the play. Richard is a scoundrel, a monstrosity with a perverted brain. Surrounding him is his evil genius, the intriguer called Thompson, and the mysterious Mawbray who pops out from behind curtains and doors at psychological moments, and who of course turns out to be Richard's actual father . . . and the hangman as well. Dumas always possessed a softness for *le bourreau* as readers of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* know. *Richard Darlington, then,* is a brutal play, as brutal as *Antony* and as swift and unified in its remorseless action. It was calculated to stun an audience with a rising series of melodramatic horrors, and as usual in Dumas's plays, there was introduced a culminating bit of stage management that was certain to arouse the gasping terror of the spectators. In *Henri III et sa Cour* it had been the business of the iron gauntlet and the bruised arm of the Duchesse de Guise. In *Christine* it had been the death of Monaldeschi. In *Antony* it had been the unexpected last line. In *Richard Darlington* it was the death of Jenny.

This climax, a problem at first with the collaborators, had been solved by a flash of theatrical genius on Dumas's part. The idea had been to have Richard fling Jenny from a window. Dumas knew that

the audience would not stand the sight of a woman struggling for her life and being dragged toward a window. He also knew that in flinging Jenny over the balcony Richard would undoubtedly expose his wife's legs which would arouse the audience, always on the lookout for these *contretemps,* to ribald laughter. After a fortnight's cogitation Dumas solved the problem. Richard double-locked the door of the room wherein he and Jenny were. Jenny ran to the balcony crying for help. Richard followed her and as he heard footsteps outside, closed the shutters of the balcony on his victim and himself, thus hiding the scene from the audience. A cry resounded from behind these closed shutters. They opened with a blow from Richard's fist and there he was, pale and trembling, alone on the balcony. It was trickery but it was new to the audiences of the 1830's. This was Dumas's *métier,* swift melodrama with unexpected climaxes and an instinctive comprehension of theatrical values. If he could not write impressive poetical drama he could at least write "good theater." He was a superb technician of thrillers.

*Richard Darlington* was produced at the Porte-Saint-Martin theater on December 10, 1831, just sixty-one days after the première of *Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux.* Frédéric Lemaître played the title part with a force and fury that swept the drama to a complete triumph. Dumas, meeting Alfred de Musset in the corridor, asked the poet what was the matter with him. The pale and sensitive author of *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie* replied: *"J'étouffe!"* For some reason Dumas refused to share the author's call and Beudin and Goubaux appeared alone on the stage to acknowledge the applause of the spectators. Yet Dumas had done by far the greater amount of work on *Richard Darlington.* The prologue had been brought to him but he had conceived the theme. The climaxes had been his and he had rewritten the entire draft of the play before it was turned over to Harel. Perhaps the new sensation of working with collaborators was displeasing to him. Except for his first two vaudevilles all of his work had been done alone although it is true that he sometimes leaned on already published and produced work for some of his effects. *Richard Darlington* was the beginning of a new method of composition for Dumas, that of working with collaborators.

Anicet Bourgeois had met Dumas through the actor, Bocage, during the rehearsals of *Richard Darlington*. Bourgeois had a play in his coat pocket. He produced it. At least, he produced a plan of a play. Bocage who had made such a success with the rôle of Antony now desired to play an old man, for what reason neither Dumas nor any one else could understand. But Bocage who had been so material a factor in the success of *Antony* would have to be humored. Dumas humored him by concocting *Térésa* from Bourgeois's plan, a worthless drama in which the rôle of Baron Delaunay was fitted to Bocage's requirements. Dumas was three weeks writing this piece, part of the time being passed among the Christmas fêtes of Villers-Cotterets. Bocage had discovered "a talented young girl who is at the Montparnasse," whose name was Ida. She was just beginning her career; she would be excellent for the part of Amélie Delaunay (this name was taken from Madame Dorval who was born Marie-Thomase-Amélie Delaunay), and Dumas, peregrinating to the Montparnasse to view this unknown phoenix, went away whistling softly. As a matter of fact Mélanie S., like that Mélanie who had preceded her, had begun to pall.

*Térésa,* produced at the Théâtre de l'Opéra-Comique (Salle Ventadour) on February 6, 1832, made a fair impression. The "talented young girl" from the Montparnasse, Ida Ferrier, was recalled before the curtain to receive the plaudits of the audience, and returning from her first triumph, she met Dumas in the wings. Immediately she flung herself into his arms, exclaiming: "Ah, you have rendered me a great service. You have made my reputation. I owe you my future . . . and I do not know how to thank you." Dumas gazed down at the fair-haired, short, rather plump young actress and explained that she could thank him by going to a late supper with him. The couple vanished and with their gay exit *à deux* vanished the dominance of Mélanie S. Mademoiselle Ferrier (born Marguerite-Joséphine Ferrant) had been born in 1811. She was twenty-two years old, a most enticing age to Dumas.

Carnival time approached and Dumas, who had heard all about the great *bal costumé* which had taken place at the Tuileries—a splendid function where the historical costumes had been designed

by Duponchel and the entire *corps législatif* had appeared—was in a willing mood to listen to Bocage's suggestion that the playwright organize such a ball for the writers and artists of Paris who, of course, had failed to receive invitations from Louis-Philippe. Dumas loved the flamboyancies of costumes. Antoine Fontaney had encountered him in the boulevards one day shortly before the première of *Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux* strolling toward Louis Boulanger's studio with an amaranthine Arab mantle over his arm. He was going to pose in it as Yaqoub, the Moslem of his poetical drama. The idea, therefore, of strutting about his own rooms in gorgeous vestments before the eyes of artistic Paris was too much to resist. Preparations were immediately instituted to make the *bal costumé* one that would be talked about for years.

Dumas had but four rooms in the Square d'Orléans. They would not hold three or four hundred people. So he engaged an empty suite of four more rooms on the same floor and his friends among the artists came with their pigments and brushes to decorate them. Ciceri designed the ceilings. Delacroix painted King Rodrigo after the defeat of the Guadalete; Louis Boulanger did a scene from Hugo's *Lucrèce Borgia*; Clément Boulanger, one from *La Tour de Nesle*; Tony Johannot, a scene from the *Sire de Giac;* his brother, Alfred, one from *Cinq Mars*; and Grandville, a huge panel reproducing all the artistic professions. Barye moulded lions and tigers for the supports of the window-frames and Célestin Nanteuil originated the ornamentation for the panels of the doors. Dumas, naturally immersed in plans for the repast, organized a hunting party and the group journeyed to Villers-Cotterets, where, spreading through the adjacent woodlands, they secured nine plump bucks. Two of these bucks were roasted whole for the *bal*. Three were exchanged with Chevet, the butcher, for a fifty-pound sturgeon. Another went for a colossal galantine. With decorations completed and steaming platters of food prepared Dumas was ready for his epochal evening. By seven o'clock he had three hundred bottles of Bordeaux put down to warm, three hundred bottles of Burgundy in the coolers, and five hundred bottles of champagne on ice. Monte Cristo was in his element.

Dumas received his guests in a sea-green jerkin braided with gold,

breeches of parti-colored red and white silk, and black velvet slippers embroidered in gold. Mélanie S., recalled from the gallery of memory to act as hostess, stood beside him clad as Helena Formann, Rubens' wife. Two orchestras, one stationed in each suite, synchronized *galops*. By midnight the eight rooms were a whirl of color, movement, laughter, dancing and music. All of literary and artistic Paris was there. The staid Doctor Véron, not yet dreaming of his legal battles with Dumas, was muffled up in rose color; Buloz, as melancholy as ever, stalked about in sky blue; Odilon Barrot wore a black domino; and the old Marquis de la Fayette appeared in a Venetian costume. Beauchène wore a Vendéen costume and the old Marquis, knowing that Beauchène passed for a Royalist, called to him: "In virtue of what privilege are you the only person here who is not wearing a disguise?" Mademoiselle Mars, Joanny, Menjaud, Firmin and Mademoiselle Leverd appeared in the costumes of *Henri III et sa Cour*. Mademoiselle Georges was disguised as a Nettuno peasant girl and Madame Paradol staggered under the heavy splendor of Anne of Austria. Déjazet, of the beautiful legs, was Madame du Barry. Rossini entered the room as Figaro. Barye was dressed as a Bengal tiger; Alphonse Royer, as a Turk; Alfred de Musset, as a weather-cock; Francisque Michel, as a vagabond; Nestor Roqueplan, as a Mexican officer; Delacroix, as Dante; and Frédéric Lemaître, as Robert Macaire covered with spangles. Eugène Sue appeared in a pistachio domino and Paul Lacroix wandered about in the mantle of an astrologer. Pétrus Borel represented Jeune-France. The list is endless. Rose Dupuis, Mademoiselle Noblet, Léontine Fay, Bocage, Moyne, Adam, Zimmermann, Pichot, Bard, Paul Fouché, Eugène Duverger, Ladvocat, the Johannots, Auguste de Chatillon, Robert Fleury; still they poured through the doors in startling and original costumes, as dolls, toreadors, Turkish slave girls, magicians, the dead kings of France, Highlanders, Chinamen and pilgrims. Tissot, of the Academy, who had made up as an invalid, was followed about solemnly by Jadin, the flower-painter, dressed as an undertaker's man. Jadin would murmur lugubriously: "I am waiting!" Tissot went home in a rage. At one time more than seven hundred people crowded into the eight rooms. Supper was served at three in the morning and at nine o'clock, when all good people had gone to their

daily labor, the *bal* ended to a final *galop* danced in the rue des Trois-Frères, the head of the procession reaching to the boulevard while its tail was still cavorting in the courtyard of the Square d'Orléans.

## IV

The idea of prose narrative continued to bite at Dumas's unceasingly active mind. Dramatic successes, *bals,* love affairs and florid Republican gestures could not stifle it. Though his days were a hurry of rehearsals, assignations, café meetings, dinners and public manifestations—it was part of his policy and inner requirements to exhibit himself in the streets and public places as often as possible—he yet found time to seat himself at the richly ornamented table in his apartment in the Square d'Orléans and write with that fury of which he alone seemed capable. While he had been concocting *Térésa* with Anicet Bourgeois he had written another play as well. Horace Vernet had sent a huge canvas from Rome depicting *Edith aux longs cheveux cherchant le corps d'Harold sur le champ de battaille d'Hastings,* and Dumas, gazing at this painting when it was exhibited, conceived the desire to write a play with the title *Edith aux longs cheveux.* To desire, with him, was to do. All that he knew about the battle of Hastings, however, was what he had read in Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe.* That was of small use to him. He determined, therefore, not to write a historical play but a drama after the style of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline.* A romance by Auguste Lafontaine, a prolific German writer of the time, gave him his central idea: the heroine takes a narcotic which puts her to sleep so that she may pass for dead, and thanks to this supposed death which releases her from the trammels of the earth, she can marry her lover. Dumas wrote his drama with customary speed, forgot his hatred of the Théâtre-Français long enough to read it there, and it was summarily refused. Harel also refused it, whereupon Dumas ordered it torn up or burnt or flung in the sewer. From this unproduced and destroyed *Edith aux longs cheveux* sprang *Catherine Howard* two years later.

At the same time the romances of Sir Walter Scott led Dumas into

the *Histoire des ducs de Bourgogne* by Barante, and a new world, a world opened up years before by Lassagne, began to unfold before the young experimenter. Dumas began to dissect and put together dialogues from Barante's opus. He called them *scènes historiques.* Though at first his discovery of the vivid picturesqueness of history was tentative, he had actually discovered his *métier.* He saw historical personages as living creatures. Out of Barante's work rose the dishevelled figure of the mad King, Charles VI, the poetic image of Odette, the imperious and licentious Isabel of Bavaria, the careless gallantry of Louis d'Orléans, the terrible character of John of Burgundy, the pale and romantic Charles VII, l'Ile-Adam and his huge sword, Tanneguy-Duchatel and his axe, the Sire de Giac and his horse, the Chevalier de Bois-Bourdon and his doublet of gold, and Perinet-Leclerc and his keys. Buloz of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* welcomed the sketches as they came from Dumas's hand and printed them in his magazine. The fire had been kindled and during the first six months of 1832 Dumas applied himself with increasing ardor to French history.

Scott's novels had influenced the French intellectuals and though Dumas had used them heretofore for dramatic reasons he saw that they suggested an example to prose writers. The forgotten advice of Lassagne came back to him. He remembered Alfred de Vigny's *Cinq-Mars* which had appeared in 1826 and Prosper Mérimée's *Chronique du Règne de Charles IX,* issued in 1829. The little known Stendhal, of whom the proud young Mérimée was an admirer, was dealing with history. A youthful historian named Michelet was recreating history in terms of flesh and blood. Vitet was already known. Augustine Thierry's *Histoire de la Conquête de l'Angleterre par les Normands* had appeared in 1825. Hugo had just witnessed the triumph of *Notre Dame de Paris.* Balzac's *Les Chouans* had been offered to the public in 1829. The time was ripe and Dumas, quick to sense the impulses in the literary air about him, began to read French history. He was like a naïve and ignorant *gosse* at first, and Delanoue, coming into his apartment one afternoon, found him immersed in a curious little book. Looking over Dumas's shoulder the visitor discovered the volume to be the Abbé Gauthier's *Histoire*

*de France,* a rhymed recital composed for schoolboys. Delanoue burst out laughing. He began to recite:

*Neuf cent quatre-sept voit Capet sur le trône.*
*Ses fils ont huit cents ans conservé la couronne!*

Dumas attempted to hide the book. Delanoue dragged it from him and continued:

*Henri-Trois, de Bologne, en France est ramené,*
*Redoute les ligueurs, et meurt assassiné!*

Dumas blushed violently. Delanoue inquired: "Did you get the details for *Henri III et sa Cour* from this?" With dignity Dumas explained that he dredged the details for his play from L'Estoille, Brantôme, d'Aubigny and Sancy. Delanoue began to advise the would-be writer of historical romances. He told him to buy Thierry and Chateaubriand and Sidoine Appollinaire and Tallemant des Réaux, to go back to the chroniclers; in other words, he repeated the advice of Lassagne, renaming the old authors and pointing out the new ones, particularly Thierry, who had emerged upon the scene since 1824. Within a day or two Dumas was reading Thierry and enjoying the exhilarating experience of witnessing in his mind's eye an entire living world of people of twelve centuries before. He was spellbound, enchanted. In after years, Dumas, writing of this period, remarked: "I perceived that, during the nine years which had rolled by, I had learnt nothing or next to nothing; I remembered my conversation with Lassagne; I understood that there was more to see in the past than in the future; I was ashamed of my ignorance, and I pressed my head convulsively between my hands." The future author of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and *La Dame de Monsoreau* was thirty years old when he made this discovery. There remained twelve long years in which to prepare himself for the lean Gascon of the long sword. With that prodigious concentration and recklessness of time and strength which were portions of his fulminating nature he plunged into a course of wide reading, carrying it on with all his other activities.

A sapphire blue sky in which a powerful sun emanated warm rays hung like a canopy over Paris. On the early green of the Tuileries gardens, women, in their light spring garments, walked about laughing and chatting. The revolutionary cabals, invigorated by the delightful weather, postponed their conspiracies and went into the suburbs of Paris to pluck flowers. The city had not experienced such peace for many years and Dumas, leaning from his window in the Square d'Orléans, the open volume of history lying on the table behind him, breathed in the warm air. Spring in Paris was perfect. The chestnut buds were out. The year 1832 seemed auspicious for charming triumphs. But from India and by way of Russia and England a black demon was circling down on the metropolis. Suddenly through the mellifluous weather came a murmur that increased to a terrified shout. "A man has just died in the rue Cauchat. The cholera is in Paris!" Instantly a black pall seemed to draw itself across the blue sky. Men and women rushed from their homes crying, "The cholera! The cholera!" just as seventeen years before they had stumbled out shouting, "The Cossacks! The Cossacks!" The days that followed were days of terror and dismay. Through the poorer quarters the cholera sped leaving a swath of black-faced corpses behind it. The hospitals filled. Men ran through the boulevards with stretchers on which writhed plague victims who often died before the pesthouses were reached. Pedestrians walking in the streets would suddenly fall to the ground, twist like an epileptic, turn blue and expire. The doctors and Sisters of Charity fought desperately against the scourge but they were outnumbered and unequal to the task. As the deaths increased wild rumors permeated the city. It was said that the Government, to get rid of the surplus population, was flinging poison into the public fountains and the casks of the wine merchants. Gisquet, the Préfet de Police, made the abominable mistake of hurling these charges back against the Republicans. Placards were put up and torn down and in this city where multitudes were dying—on the eighteenth of April alone the number of mortalities reached a thousand—unfortunate wretches, accused as poisoners without cause, were knocked down with clubs, assassinated with knives and torn to pieces by dogs and the talons of ferocious women. The implacable blue sky

with its mocking sun glowed above a city that had become both charnel-house and slaughter-house.

From his window in the Square d'Orléans Dumas saw the unending series of funeral cortèges on their way to the Montmartre cemetery. Fifty or sixty would pass in a day, the black plumes waving above the heads of the skinny horses. Already the supply of coffins had given out and corpses were wrapped in tapestries, tipped from these ironically-colored hangings into graves and covered with a shroud of lime. What did Dumas do during this terrible season? First of all, with the assistance of Anicet Bourgeois and Eugene Delrieu, he composed a one-act comedy, *Le Mari de la Veuve,* which was produced during the epidemic at the Théâtre-Français as a benefit for Mademoiselle Dupont. A few spectators, daring the streets where the drums beat incessantly and the stretchers passed by, attended the première. Then Dumas continued his historical researches for a book he had conceived, to be called *Gaule et France.* He shut himself away from the plague as Stephen Bloundel, the grocer of Wood Street, did in London in 1665. Friends came to see him during the evenings. Ida was there to shower affection on him. Liszt, the composer, came and pounded away at the bad piano and ended by breaking it to pieces. Hugo recited his latest poems. Fourcade and Delanoue and Châtillon and Boulanger talked of art. Behind the curtains it was warm, the food was good, the wine was rare. There was laughter. Outside the bells tolled and the black-plumed horses stumbled along the cobbles. That rascal, Harel, who had sublimely announced through the press that "it has been noticed with surprise that theaters are the only public places where, whatever the number of spectators, no case of cholera has yet appeared," forced his way in and demanded that Dumas rewrite a play called *La Tour de Nesle* which the manager carried under his arm. Dumas waved him away. He did not feel like working. It was better to sup and laugh and talk and spout verses and play music while the black terror stalked abroad.

One evening, the fifteenth of April, when Dumas stood at the top of the stairs shouting farewell to Liszt and Boulanger, he was seized with a slight trembling. He leaned against the bannisters for support and his maid, Catherine, exclaimed at his pallid appearance. A shaking possessed his entire body and this was followed by an extreme

chill. "It is queer," he mumbled. "I feel very cold." "Ah, monsieur," cried the maid, "that is how it begins!" Dumas staggered to his bed chattering, "A lump of sugar . . . dipped in ether . . . a doctor." Tremblingly he began to disrobe himself. The distracted maid, hardly conscious of what she was doing, brought to the shivering victim a full wine glass of ether, and he, ignorant of the contents, drained it at a draught. At that moment he felt as though he had swallowed the sword of the avenging angel. He fell unconscious upon his bed. Two hours later when he awakened from his trance he was in a vapor bath, and a doctor assisted by a friendly neighbor was attending him. He who thought he had swallowed the sword of fate now thought that he had waked up in hell. For a week he remained in bed, hot and cold, delirious, aching in every limb, and every day "that rascal Harel" called with his play tucked beneath his arm, sat in the hallway, and waited impatiently for the stricken dramatist to recover his senses.

When Dumas, very feeble as he rose from his bed, hobbled to the sunlight of the open window, he saw a bright blue sky, smiling faces, and heard the exhilarating hum of fearless and joyous intercourse. The bright sun shone down on Paris, and women clad in brightly-hued gowns strolled about the fresh greenery of the Tuileries gardens. The epidemic had passed. The black demon had vanished as noiselessly as he had appeared.

Harel, his clever face twisted in a confident smile, sat doggedly in his chair and waited. Dumas flung up his arms in helpless surrender and said: "Well, what is your play about?"

Harel explained. A young man from Tonnerre named Frédéric Gaillardet had written a drama about the orgies of the infamous Marguerite de Bourgogne in the Tour de Nesle, that gloomy round tower that had once stood close to the Pont-Neuf. Master François Montcorbier *dit* Villon had mentioned Marguerite in his *Ballade des Dames du Temps Jadis.*

*. . . Où est la Royne*
*Qui commanda que Buridan*
*Fust jetté en ung sac en Seine?*

But Frédéric Gaillardet could not write and his play was unactable. It needed revision and extensive carpentering. Harel went on to explain that Jules Janin had tried to improve it but except for the addition of several excellent *tirades* had added nothing of value. Would Dumas improve the script? Harel cocked his head on one side and waited. Dumas complained of his weakness. The fever was still in his bones, his eyes dazzled, he could hardly lift his head. "I will send my secretary Verteuil to take your dictation," suggested Harel. "I am dying, idiot!" exclaimed Dumas. Harel whistled softly and gazed at the ceiling. "Well," said Dumas, rolling over with his face to the wall, "send Verteuil with your damned script tomorrow!" As he reached for his hat Harel murmured, "I must have the complete play in two weeks." Dumas heard the door close softly behind the manager. He will kill me, he thought. Nevertheless, the idea of the play pleased him. Margaret of Burgundy. Buridan. The gloomy tower. The corpses thrown by night into the Seine. What was the fellow's name? . . . Paillard . . . no, no . . . Gaillard . . . Gaillardet.

Verteuil appeared bright and early and was amazed at the skinny, pallid, exhausted shell of a man who lay on the bed. It would never do. "Harel will kill you!" he exclaimed. Dumas waved a weak hand. M. Gaillardet's play was unrolled and read to Dumas. He raised himself weakly on his arm while a faint spark shone in his eye. "No, no . . . he has gone wrong after the second scene . . . another climax entirely . . ." That afternoon he began to dictate his own version of *La Tour de Nesle,* including but two of Gaillardet's scenes and a solitary *tirade* by Jules Janin. In nine days the script was in the hands of Harel and the rehearsals, which had started with the completion of the first scene some days before, were well under way. It was his play, Dumas felt, for he had recreated it out of a few borrowed hints and some scattered speeches, but Gaillardet alone should have the credit for it. He wrote the fledgling playwright to this effect, but an indignant young cock immediately made his appearance in Paris denouncing the collaboration as a fraud perpetrated upon him and an humiliation that he would not accept in silence. Harel sat in his office and smiled. A law suit would be excellent publicity. Dumas, still weak and light-headed, was troubled. Still . . . it *was* his play.

Harel forced the indignant young Gaillardet into a compromise. The program should read "By Frédéric Gaillardet and * * *."

On May 29, 1832, *La Tour de Nesle* was produced at the Porte Saint-Martin theater with a cast which included the trustworthy Bocage as Buridan, Lockroy as Gaultier d'Aulnay, Delafosse (who had no visor to trouble him this time) as Philippe d'Aulnay, and Mademoiselle Georges as Marguerite de Bourgogne. Dumas, still weak from the effects of the cholera, sat in a stage box with Odilon Barrot and his wife and saw the drama mount steadily to a dizzy triumph. The terrors of *Antony* and *Richard Darlington* were lost in the superterror of this moving melodrama which actually rose to tragedy in several of its scenes. *La Tour de Nesle* contained all the elements of pure melodrama, historical interest and tragic horror. The two adversaries, Buridan and the licentious Queen, moved steadily through a series of imbroglios to that horrible moment when they realized that they were contriving the death of their son. And in the prison scene where the desperate Buridan, a close-kept prisoner, turned the tables on Marguerite who had come to gloat over him and forced her to release him from his bonds French drama reached a new apex. The play swept Paris. Its première marked the first of eight hundred performances. It stood for years as a symbol of high perfection in French melodrama. Dumas, sitting beside the vivacious Madame Barrot, listened calmly as Bocage, dressed in the doublet and boots of Buridan, came forward and announced: "The author . . . Monsieur Frédéric Gaillardet," to the stormy applause of the audience. The older dramatist walked feebly down the stairs and passed the young man from Tonnerre who stood in the midst of a swirling mass of well-wishers. Let M. Frédéric have his triumph. Already the rumor was spreading through Paris that * * * stood for a well known writer, for an experienced dramatist, and the spectators had not failed to distinguish a personal touch in *La Tour de Nesle* that reminded them of the work of a tall young man who wore extravagant gilets. Dumas did not realize at the time that this collaboration, unsought for on the part of the young fire-eater from Tonnerre, was to end in that familiar order: pistols for two.

He began to realize it the next day. Harel slyly changed the billing to read: *La Tour de Nesle, par * * * et Frédéric Gaillardet.* Making

BOCAGE

*As Buridan in* La Tour de Nesle

BOCAGE
*In Téresa*

the asterisks more important than the name infuriated Gaillardet who wrote a letter to the press about it. Dumas watched the developments with some unrest. Harel responded in the paper by insisting that nineteen-twentieths of the play had been written by the collaborator *inconnu*. Gaillardet riposted by making public Dumas's letter to him, the letter in which the elder man had promised the sole glory of *La Tour de Nesle* to the younger man. Dumas then lost his temper and wrote to the press a strong letter commenting on Gaillardet's use of a personal note and asserting that he had written the play without even having seen the younger man's version. It was now open war between an angry young man from Tonnerre who saw himself the victim of a powerful playwright and a powerful playwright who saw in the young man from Tonnerre nothing but a selfish cub. Gaillardet did the one thing he could; he went to court and secured a decision adjudging *La Tour de Nesle* to be his own composition on technical grounds. The asterisks were switched back, and for a time the excitement died down. Damage, however, had been done to Dumas, for this affair was the first in which the playwright had been accused of purloining another man's work, and his enemies—and there was a countless number of them in Paris who resented the success of the nobody from Villers-Cotterets—possessed a new weapon with which to attack him.

On the first day of June, while litigation over the authorship of *La Tour de Nesle* was beginning to excite literary circles, General Lamarque, that Lamarque whom Napoleon had created a Maréchal de France at St. Helena, died of the cholera. His death was of inflammable consequences, for the Republicans were using the name of the Emperor as a weapon against the Legitimists. It was this Lamarque who had exclaimed: "The peace of 1815 is no peace; it is a halt in the mud!" His memory, therefore, stood for a revolutionary symbol and the radical Republicans, among them Étienne Arago, Bastide and Godefroy Cavaignac, saw in his obsequies an opportunity to overthrow the July monarchy. Martial preparations were made and on June fifth, the day of the cortège, all the revolutionary elements followed the bier through the streets of Paris, bearing concealed weapons beneath their cloaks and shouting, "Honor to General Lamarque."

Dumas who had known the General slightly was in the midst of this din. His republican principles were still burning matters to him. Marching beside the artillery with a tri-colored sash about his arm and a saber in his hand, he saw the thousands of National Guardsmen, artillerymen, workmen, students, old soldiers, refugees and beggars who filled the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. He also observed the soldiers of the King, carabiniers, dragoons and light infantry, for Louis-Philippe understood only too well that Paris this day was a volcano liable to erupt fire and death. Overhead the electricity-charged air burst into a driving rain. A fever of unrest permeated the stormy atmosphere as the catafalque, beside which walked the old Marquis de la Fayette together with generals and high dignitaries, was borne through the streets, about the Vendôme Column and along the boulevard Bourdon. Minor skirmishes between angry students and stupid police marred the solemnity of the parade. One youth had his throat slashed and the blood streamed down on his July decoration. "Where are they leading us?" shrilled a student. A sonorous voice replied: "To the Republic! And we invite you to supper with us tonight in the Tuileries." Dumas saw men tearing up stakes which were used as props for the young trees that had replaced the old ones cut down during the Three Days. He understood that this multitude, grumbling to one another, clutching concealed pistols beneath wet cloaks, needed but a spark to inflame it. The body passed the city limits and the mourners surged back. The rain had stopped but the sky was still an abysmal black.

Dumas, exhausted with the long march, was half-carried into a restaurant where he was revived with iced water and a huge fish pie. It was while he was eating that he heard the sharp clatter of five or six shots. His weakness seemed to leave him and throwing the price of the fish pie upon the table he ran out of the restaurant toward the nearest quai. There seemed to be a great commotion about the Pont d'Austerlitz. No doubt of it, another revolution was to succeed the ravages of the cholera in Paris. When Dumas reached the bridge he found it guarded by men in blouses. "What is it?" he shouted. "What has been happening?" One of the guards replied: "Only that they are firing on the people, and the artillery has returned the fire; *père* Louis-Philippe is at his last gasp and the Republic is proclaimed.

*Vive la République!"* This declaration was, to say the least, premature. It was true enough that within an hour or so a state of insurrection existed in the city, but it was a demoralized insurrection, lacking in the unified ferociousness of the Three July Days. Dumas, from a window of the Porte Saint-Martin theater, to which he had retreated when the sharp crackle of gunfire in the surrounding streets had grown ominously close, saw a mother beating her son because he had thrown a stone at a dragoon. The playwright lowered his head. "The women are not with us this time," he muttered. "We are lost!" The specters of shouting women with flashing eyes and loosened hair, those tigresses of the proletariat who fell at the barricades with their men, flashed across his mind.

Revolutionists were hammering at the stage door of the Porte Saint-Martin and Dumas, recovering from his reverie, ran down the stairs to Harel who was walking up and down wringing his hands. "They will pillage the theater," exclaimed the manager. Dumas faced the perspiring men. They wanted rifles. If it was necessary they would seize them. Dumas made one of his dramatic gestures. "Have twenty rifles brought out, Harel," he said. When the guns—they had been used for properties in the ill-fated *Napoléon*—were produced, Dumas distributed them to the insurgents saying, "It is I, Alexandre Dumas, who lend you these guns; those who get killed I will not bother, but those who survive will bring back their arms. Is that understood?" It was. A few minutes later the theater was empty. Dumas, changing his clothes—he had been wearing an artilleryman's uniform—proceeded to M. Laffitte's house where he listened to the startled deputies as they hissed like geese.

The Republicans could not carry the city with them and by the next morning, June sixth, only two quarters, those of the Place de la Bastille and the streets contiguous to the entrance of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, were defended by the insurgents. During the day these positions were captured by governmental forces and the abortive revolution collapsed. Dumas, pale and sick, saw the Republican hopes dissipated again by the disciplined front of the Royalist troops and the apathy of the populace. "Is not everything at an end now?" asked François Arago, when the committee of deputies left Laffitte's house to seek out Louis-Philippe and protest against the revolt of the previous

day. "No!" said a man of the people who was standing near Arago. "They are waiting for the tocsin from the Church of Saint-Merry, *for so long as a sick man's death rattle can be heard he is alive.*" It was not time for the tocsin.

Dumas began to worry about his own skin. He knew that he had been under suspicion as a militant republican for almost a year. Harel, whose eye was always cocked on business, came to him on the seventh of June and demanded a play. Reluctantly Dumas dragged forth three acts of a drama called *Le Fils de l'Émigré* which he had begun some time before from a hint by Anicet Bourgeois. The playwright was ill and worried. He felt lethargic. He had pains in the head. He wanted to get away from Paris, to go on a journey and refresh his mind with new scenes and strange customs. He was also fearful. Any moment there might come a knock at the door and behind the summons might appear an officer of the police. During the seventh and eighth of June he called in Anicet Bourgeois and they scrambled together the last two acts of *Le Fils de l'Émigré*. On the ninth of June, Dumas read in a legitimist paper that he had been taken with arms upon him at the Cloitre Saint-Merry, judged by court-martial during the night and shot at three o'clock in the morning. The account of the execution was so vivid that the startled Dumas felt his body for probable bullet holes. The next morning he received a letter from Charles Nodier which read:

> My dear Alexandre—I have at this moment read in a newspaper that you were shot on June 6, at three in the morning. Be so good as to tell me if it will prevent you from coming to dine tomorrow at the Arsenal, with Dauzats, Taylor, Bixio and in fact our usual friends.—Your very good friend, Charles Nodier, who will be delighted at the opportunity to ask you for news of the other world.

Dumas smiled a trifle wanly and wrote back that his shadow would appear at the Arsenal. He *was* but the shadow of himself now. The cholera had made more serious inroads than he had imagined, and the excitement of the early June days with their abortive revolution and the trouble over *La Tour de Nesle* had retarded his health still more. It was an ill young man, therefore, who received a brief visit from a

polite aide-de-camp of the King bearing news that the advisability of the playwright's arrest was under consideration and that perhaps the air abroad might be beneficial. Louis-Philippe was tired of his quadroon play-boy with the *tête-montée*.

For a month or six weeks Dumas was occupied in clearing up his affairs, forcing five thousand francs out of the niggardly Harel, securing a passport and bidding farewell to all his friends. On the evening of July 21, 1832, he drove through the gates of Paris towards Auxerre. The city by the Seine looked beautiful in the dim light: church spires, the dome of the Institute, the Vendôme Column, and the towers of Notre Dame gleaming against the mauve canopy of the sky. He had been a part of the city's life for nine years without interruption and now he was an exile. He sighed and set his face toward Switzerland. At least there were mountains there and he had never seen mountains.

# CHAPTER TWO

## NOMAD

### I

Dumas was enchanted with Switzerland. He played like a boy and his illness fell from him as by magic. He forgot the aggravating whirl of Paris, the nervous tension of theatrical productions and the dangers of republican manifestations. At Geneva he admired the jewel shops, especially the large one conducted by Beautte, and all his negro blood yearned for the glittering arrays of precious stones. He went to the theater and saw Jenny Vertpré, *"cette gracieuse miniature de Mademoiselle Mars,"* in one of her more famous rôles. At Ferney (now Ferney-Voltaire) he visited the chapel and read the inscription, "Deo Erexit Voltaire," and dryly remarked, "Its object is to let the world know that God and Voltaire have become reconciled." He never approved of Voltaire-worship. At Coppet he wept beside the bed upon which Madame de Staël had died. At Bex he fished by night using a bill-hook and lighting his way with a lantern, and at the Lake of Zug he shot a trout with a fowling-piece. He visited Chamounix and saw the Mer de Glace and shivered, remarking that he suffered from *mal-de-mer*. He went chamois hunting with Swiss guides and suffered from his usual attacks of dizziness when he climbed to high altitudes. He cooked a huge omelette for some charming women at an inn, observing: "An omelette is to cookery what a sonnet is to poetry." In other words, he was himself, jovial, witty, boyish, an agreeable table companion and a keen observer of life. Three of his pilgrimages deserve to be noted in greater detail.

He breakfasted with M. de Chateaubriand at the Hôtel de l'Aigle in Lucerne and stuttered like a country bumpkin, so much was he in awe of the old father of Romanticism. Chateaubriand was charm

itself and he talked freely with Dumas about contemporary politics and his own attitude toward the perplexing problems of the day. The author of *Le Génie du Christianisme* was weary. He took Dumas to see the Lion of Lucerne and the younger man inquired: "Which names would be inscribed on the gravestones of royalty to balance these popular names if a similar monument were raised in France?" "Not one!" replied Chateaubriand. "Do you really mean that?" exclaimed Dumas. The old man said: "Perfectly; the dead do not get themselves killed." Chateaubriand proceeded on his way to feed water-fowls, and Dumas followed him filled with an intense veneration for this calm veteran of life. "If you regret Paris so much," he asked, "why not go back to it?" Chateaubriand answered: "I was at Cauterets when the July Revolution took place. I returned to Paris; I beheld one throne in blood and another in mud, lawyers drawing up a charter and a king shaking hands with rag-and-bone men. It was sad as death, especially when, as in my case, one is filled with the great traditions of monarchy." A moment later he murmured that Henri V, the son of the Duchesse de Berry, should have been made king in place of Louis-Philippe. Dumas reminded him of the evil genius that followed the name Henri. Henri I was poisoned, Henri II killed in tournament, Henri III and Henri IV assassinated. Chateaubriand shrugged his shoulders and replied: "It is better to die by poison than in exile; it is sooner over and one suffers less."

Dumas's second pilgrimage was to Reichenau where Louis-Philippe in his days of exile had taught arithmetic and geography for five francs a day. His sentimentality conquered his anger here and Dumas wrote a long letter to the Prince Royal, the young Duc d'Orléans, describing the small college and the schoolroom and suggesting that it be made into a memorial. This curious gesture on the part of a republican who had been invited by the royal house to leave Paris is evidence of the usual inconsistency in Dumas's political opinions. It was also, perhaps, a sly attempt to soften the irritation of Louis-Philippe. "It was," declared the sentimentalist in his letter to the King's son, "I admit, with emotion intermingled with pride, that, in this very place, in the room situated in the middle of the corridor, with its folding door, its flower-painted side doors, its corner chimney places, its pictures of Louis XV surrounded with gilt arabesques and

its decorated ceiling; it was, I say with keen emotion, that, in this room, where the Duc de Chartres had taught, I gathered information concerning the strange vicissitudes of a royal personage who, not wishing to beg the bread of exile, worthily bought it with his work."

A short while after dropping his tear over the vicissitudes of the Orléans family Dumas was at the Château d'Arenenberg paying his devoirs to Hortense Bonaparte, ex-Queen of Holland. He saw Madame Récamier there and thought that she was beautiful as she entered the hall dressed in a black gown and with a dark veil wound about her head and throat. Juliette was fifty-five years old at this time. Dumas pleased the ex-Queen and he remained at the château for three days, admiring the pictures of Napoleon, reading Victor Hugo's ode on the death of the duc de Reichstadt, the clipped eaglet who had passed away at Schönbrunn on July twenty-second of this year, and discussing politics with Hortense. The Queen sounded him thoroughly on the condition of affairs in Paris and Dumas made one amazing prophecy. Hortense asked him what advice he would give to a Bonaparte who dreamt of restoring the glory and power of Napoleon and Dumas answered: "I would tell him to obtain the cancelling of his exile, to buy a plot of ground in France and to make use of the immense popularity of his name to get himself elected a deputy, to try by his talent to win over the majority of the Chamber, and to use it to depose Louis-Philippe and become elected king in his stead." The shadow of the *Coup d'État* of 1851 must have hovered over Arenenberg for a moment.

It was at Arenenberg that Dumas found French newspapers and hastily acquainted himself with what had transpired since his absence. M. Jay, a mediocre political writer, had been elected to the Academy over M. Thiers. A painter named Blondel had achieved the Institute with eighteen votes to Delaroche's three. Mademoiselle Falcon had made her début in *Robert le Diable*. The Saint-Simonians were in trouble. Two men had received death sentences from the Seine Court of Assizes for political offences and Paris was in an uproar about it. Since the death of Louis XVIII capital punishment for political crimes had been superseded by gentler measures. And *Le Fils de l'Émigré* by MM. Anicet Bourgeois and Alexandre Dumas was announced for immediate production at the Porte Saint-Martin theater. Dumas

decided to return to Paris. He had seen enough of Switzerland, his note-books were crammed with material and the vision of applauding audiences, midnight suppers and red mouths danced before his eyes.

He reached Koenigsfelden before he secured a newspaper giving an account of the opening night of *Le Fils de l'Émigré*. The journal was his old enemy, *Le Constitutionnel,* the periodical he had ridiculed in *Antony,* and it did not mince matters in its scathing treatment of the unfortunate drama Dumas had so hurriedly concocted with Bourgeois. Dumas, a trifle surprised at observing his name prominently displayed in the *critique*—he had urged its suppression before he left Paris—read grimly the account of how the disgusted audience rose before the final scene and left the theater. "Criticism of such plays as these is impossible," declared *Le Constitutionnel,* "one leaves them as quickly as one can, as one kicks aside a repulsive object." And as a final prod at the playwright: "His talent seems to be completely dead."

By the beginning of October Dumas was back in Paris and it was not long before he discovered that his fortunes had shifted once more. The débâcle of *Le Fils de l'Émigré* had practically ruined him as a dramatist. *Henri III et sa Cour, Antony,* and *La Tour de Nesle* were forgotten. Nothing but the flat failure was remembered. Theatrical managers who had once been sycophantic now avoided him on the street and did not seem to notice him at dinners. Véron who but a short while before had been begging him for contributions to *La Revue de Paris* discovered that he had no room left in his periodical for the name of Dumas. Sneering innuendoes about the crisp-haired quadroon appeared in the smaller journals. Dumas swallowed hard. It was curious. It was incomprehensible. Ten months before Paris had been at his feet and *Richard Darlington* was the subject of salon conversation. Six months before *La Tour de Nesle* had aroused speculation, argument and praise. And now he was as deserted as the cheapest and most unsuccessful boulevard dramatist. Well, Paris was like that, short-memoried, genuflecting before the shadow of success, haughty and distant to failure. Every triumph was but the maintenance of one's perilous position and each failure was a step backward. There was no progression. He had been away less than four months

and suffered one failure and now his name aroused either silence or ridicule. He looked in the *Annuaire* and read: "It is a mass of turpitudes, a sequence of scenes as false as they are ignoble, which it would disgust us to enumerate." *That* was about *Le Fils de l'Émigré.* Then he turned to a review of a drama called *Périnet Leclerc* in the same issue and read: "It bears witness to literary and historic studies very rare in modern dramatists, and has in general the great advantage over most of the plays of this theater (the Porte Saint-Martin), particularly *Le Fils de l'Émigré,* of not revolting the spectator constantly by a jumble of crimes and pictures of debauchery each more horrible than the last." Well, well! *Périnet Leclerc* had been dramatized by Anicet Bourgeois and Lockroy from Dumas's *scènes historiques* in the *Revue des Deux Mondes.* But the *Annuaire* did not know that. And some time later when Dumas collected these same *scènes historiques* in book form he was accused of lifting the best situations from *Périnet Leclerc.*

What should he do now? The Swiss journey had been expensive and among his many obligations were the care of his mother, Alexandre *fils* and Marie-Alexandre. Mélanie S. had disappeared from his horizon but Ida Ferrier was relying upon him for the furtherance of her career. He had flung his money right and left, on *bals,* rich foods, extravagant garments and many women. It was a state of affairs that tortured him, for his tastes had been spoiled by success and the idea of eating six *sous* dinners in the rue de Tournon was too dreary a prospect. He knew that he would have to forsake the theater until the antagonism against him had died down. What else was he fitted for? News of the death of Sir Walter Scott gave him an idea. Prose! Why, yes. He had been told that he possessed wit, that he commanded an excellent narrative vein. There were the *scènes historiques,* which had been printed by Buloz and there was his unfinished *Gaule et France.* He would settle down to the history of France and reinvigorate it, injecting into it the passion which Scott had lacked. So during the late fall and winter of 1832 he led a quiet life, passing the greater part of his time in his apartment where he ravished the learned volumes of Thierry and Chateaubriand and pieced together his curiously unscholarly but vivid panorama of *Gaule et France,* a work extraordinarily readable, crammed with unexpected viewpoints and colored with astonishing prophecies, among them a prophecy of the

future Republic. It was a compilation, to be sure, but one so suffused with the ardent and reckless personality of the author that it assumed the stature of an original composition. M. Thiers's police arrested Madame la Duchesse de Berry at Nantes and Dumas continued to write. Victor Hugo's *Le Roi s'Amuse* was produced for one performance in late November at the Théâtre-Français and then interdicted, but Dumas, so often the brilliant and noisy parakeet at premières, did not attend. He was writing. Also, a coldness had crept into his relations with the Sun-God, a rift widened by over-talkative mutual friends. The political trials of the periodicals, *Le Corsaire* and *La Tribune,* took place, and the right of association to discuss politics without authorization by the Government was established to the delirious joy of the Republicans, and still Dumas wrote. Hérold's opera, *Le Pré-aux-Clercs,* was sung at the Opéra Comique and the pen of the amateur historian continued to travel steadily over sheet after sheet of blue paper. To begin a new career at thirty required intensive application.

## II

As the year 1833 moved toward a fair spring and the chill winds that roared through the Cité and along the boulevards diminished, the busy pen of Dumas began to slacken. Huge piles of manuscript cluttered the broad table in the Square d'Orléans. Beside his *Gaule et France,* now almost ready for the press, he was composing a series of articles about his Swiss travels, essays so compact with humor and sprightliness that the lean Buloz snapped them up for his *Revue des Deux Mondes.* Money was beginning to flow into the empty coffers. It was time to relax again, to refresh himself at those bright social fountains of wit and laughter that dotted the city. The Sunday evening gatherings at the Arsenal found him as buoyant as ever, as expansive in his affection for Charles Nodier. The cafés knew him. In a cerise gilet and a green cloak he could be seen at the Café de Paris, that gathering place of journalists, deep in conversation with his old friends, Nestor Roqueplan, Alphonse de Leuven, Véron, Dufougerais, the director of *La Mode,* and Mazéres, the dramatist. Or he would be sprawled at one of the small tables in the Café du Divan

discoursing with that comedian, Méry the Marseilleise, or the brilliant Henri Monnier, or the exuberant Théophile Gautier, or the strange Gérard de Nerval whom he had recently met. At the Café des Aveugles he sat and listened to Blondelet play upon four tambours at once. Time passed rapidly in this way. *Gaule et France* was entrusted to the printer and the series of chapters on Switzerland was refashioned into the first *Impressions de Voyage.*

Into this vibrant activity came the dark shadow of perplexing politics once more. Early in February mysterious reports concerning the illness of the captive Duchesse de Berry appeared in the periodicals. The meaning was plain: Madame was *enceinte.* An immediate fury broke out in the antagonistic camps of Legitimists and Republicans. *La Corsaire* bluntly intimated the cause of Madame's seclusion and a Legitimist paper, *Revenant,* after refuting this calumny on royalty, received a collective challenge from the Republicans. Paris became a whirlpool of passions, and young men stalked about breathing oaths, oiling their pistols and polishing their swords. Armand Carrel, editor of *Le National,* composed a diatribe against the Duchesse de Berry, and immediately received a list of twelve Legitimists, one of whom he was required to meet. Dumas could not disengage himself from the mounting fever. He flew to Carrel's house and offered himself as an opponent against the twelve Legitimists. Carrel, who had become anti-Romantic and therefore cool toward Dumas, patiently explained that it was to be only a single encounter. A few days later Roux-Laborie, the representative of the Legitimists, shot Carrel through the groin during a formal duel. Carrel became one of the heroes of the city. Renewed challenges flew like a flock of birds through the streets and Dumas, pressing eagerly toward the field of action, proceeded to challenge the Legitimist Beauchène. Carrel, however, after a few days of danger, grew convalescent and forbade any more duels. The storm died down, and Dumas, who had been only moderately interested in the Duchesse de Berry's immaculate status, returned to his prose.

On the tenth of May Madame la Duchesse de Berry, confined in the Citadel of Blaye, gave birth to a daughter. She had been secretly married to Comte Hector de Lucchesi-Palli, a prince of the House of Campo-Franco.

His brief foray into political excitement terminated, Dumas found the composition of prose rather dull. He had attended the first performance of Hugo's *Lucrèce Borgia* in spite of the coldness existing between him and the Sun-God, and the sight of an audience, the glitter of the stage and the musty scent of the dusty theater had awakened a nostalgia. After all, there was nothing comparable to sitting in an author's box and listening to the plaudits of the mob. Memories of the premières of *Henri III et sa Cour,* of *Antony, Richard Darlington, La Tour de Nesle,* flooded back to his mind. The débacle of *Le Fils de l'Émigré* was forgotten. It would soon be a year since it had halted his dramatic career. The sight of Anicet Bourgeois, the faithful Anicet, looming in his doorway one morning brought these reveries to a decision. Couldn't something be done with that idea he had given Anicet for a play some time before the Swiss journey? Anicet's eyes sparkled. Within a week they were collaborating on a drama which they called *Angèle* and which would serve Ida Ferrier, whose plumpness was steadily increasing through inaction, as a means of return to public favor.

*Gaule et France* was published during the late summer, and though Dumas as a historian was laughed at in some quarters, he was taken seriously by a number of indubitable authorities. Augustin Thierry was frank in his praise. It was possible that he recognized his own influence in the work. The amateur historian prepared to settle back and bask in the warm sun of a new renown.

The pleasant days of autumn passed and then, on the first of November, Dumas was awakened from his day-dream. A ferocious attack on his work appeared in the *Journal des Débats.* It was signed by one Granier de Cassagnac and it accused the playwright-historian of filching his situations and characters from Goethe, Schiller, Walter Scott and Lope de Vega. This first article was based mainly on *Gaule et France* but it was followed by others, the second appearing on the sixteenth of the month, and in them the new critic of the amazed Dumas arrayed in order a long display of various plagiarisms to be found in *Henri III et sa Cour, Christine,* and *Charles VII chez ses grands vassaux.* There was sufficient ground for some of these accusations, but Cassagnac often exceeded himself in the heat of his subject, attributing to Dumas debts that were, to say the least, extremely

remote. Too many situations were common property and Romanticism itself paraded too boldly in borrowed plumage to warrant forcing Dumas into the position of scapegoat. Who was Granier de Cassagnac? He was an obstreperous young journalist who had been born in Gers, who had come to Paris in 1832, who had attached himself to the Romantic cause and who had been tucked graciously and condescendingly under the regal wing of Victor Hugo. It was not long until Dumas discovered that the Sun-God had been responsible, either actively or tacitly, for the Cassagnac attack. It was Hugo who had recommended Cassagnac to the editors of the *Journal des Débats*. It was Hugo who had revised the proofs of the first article. The reasons for this curious estrangement between the two field marshals of the Romantic army were not hard to find. Hugo, swollen with pride, was at the same time the victim of an almost feminine jealousy. The successes of Dumas had been too much for him. The nobody from Villers-Cotterets was a constant topic of discussion in the newspapers and *salons*. The pre-eminence of Victor Hugo was threatened. Another more subtle reason became apparent five days later when, on the fifth of November, Hugo's *Marie Tudor* was produced and revealed itself as having been inspired by Dumas's *Christine*. The Sun-God was merely covering himself. His *Lucrèce Borgia* which had appeared so short a time before, also bore points of resemblance to *La Tour de Nesle*. He who was not above suspicion could think of nothing better than to divert that suspicion as speedily as possible. It was for this reason that Cassagnac even accused Dumas of pillaging *Hernani*. Then, too, Dumas's wit irritated Hugo. During one of their infrequent meetings in theater foyers Dumas had exclaimed: "Why do you make the poor sickly bigoted Mary into a shameless courtesan?" Hugo had responded grandly, "For that matter, what pains you took to violate your Queen Christine." Dumas's reply was crushing: *"Quand je la viole, moi, je lui fais un enfant!"*

Hugo's vicarious victory through the pen of Granier de Cassagnac was short lived. Dumas wrote a warm letter of expostulation to him, and the perturbed Sun-God strove to dodge the indictment, at last weakly intimating that the article had been printed by mistake. The thin excuse did not blind the ranks of the Romanticists. Even Sainte-Beuve, struggling between his intense admiration for Hugo's work

and his badly concealed love for Hugo's wife, deplored it. Alfred de Vigny, always a friend of Dumas, was emphatic in his disapprobation as were most of the younger writers. Comments against Hugo began to appear in the papers. Nevertheless the damage had been done and the smirch of plagiarism was never to be lifted from Dumas's work during his lifetime. His curious method of collaboration was misrepresented, his originality of temperament was denied and his vitality and magic touch were ignored.

This onslaught did not retard his vigor, however. He was welcoming the publication of the first *Impressions de Voyage,* attending the rehearsals of *Angèle* at the Porte-Saint-Martin and moving his effects to a larger and more elaborate apartment at number thirty, rue Bleu. Thereafter Ida Ferrier and Dumas possessed the same address. *Angèle* was produced on December 28, 1833, and proved to be a success. It was to be the last of the plays in the vein of *Antony* except possibly one. That group, which includes *Richard Darlington* in addition to the two mentioned, and possibly *Kean,* gave a romantico-melodramatic picture of the *moeurs contemporains* of the 1830s, and from it sprang a vast number of natural successors. But as far as Dumas's development was concerned, the vein was ended. Of over fifty plays that he was still to write (one cannot be sure of the number) more than half were based on historical characters and periods. In some cases the plots were frankly fantastical. A further group included operettas and light comedies. The success of *Angèle* accelerated Dumas's dramatic impetus and as the year 1833 ended, the conceptions of several dramas were stirring in his mind.

## III

Three important episodes marked the restless life of Dumas during the year 1834. *Catherine Howard* was produced; the Théâtre-Français attempted a *rapprochement;* and he fought a duel with Frédéric Gaillardet. Interweaving this trio of occurrences were the complicated threads of his vividly-hued existence, an existence that alternately amused and amazed Paris. His ceaseless energy carried him everywhere, to the cafés, along the wide stretches of the boulevards and through the auditoriums and green rooms of a dozen theaters. He

might be encountered at the exhibitions of pictures, draped in his extravagant garments, sometimes with the plump Ida Ferrier clutching his arm. Again he might be observed at the studio of some writer or artist with Alexandre *fils*. His prose articles continued to make a fairly regular appearance in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. He had a hand in several plays. There was *La Vénitienne,* for example, which was produced at the Porte-Saint-Martin theater on March 18, 1834, and though announced as the work of Anicet Bourgeois it was in reality a collaboration between him and the author of *Angèle*. Later in the year, on June 24th, a revue produced under the title of *La Tour de Babel* at the Théâtre des Variétés revealed the witty touch of Dumas in several of its scenes. The young man acquired a secretary, an Italian named Rusconi who had served General Dermoncourt in the same capacity. He was again on the top of the wave, living his life in public and affording the newspapers amusing material for their pertinent paragraphs.

It was in the early spring that the Théâtre-Français, scene of Dumas's first triumphs, attempted a *rapprochement*. One bright morning the playwright was surprised to receive a summons to the Home Office from M. Thiers. M. Thiers did not beat about the bush. He pointed out that the Théâtre-Français was going to the devil, that Dumas and Hugo had been very successful at the Porte-Saint-Martin, and that he was considering playing the works of dead authors on Sundays only at the national house of drama and reserving the rest of the week for such living forces as Hugo and the young man before him. Dumas was properly impressed but at the same time he pointed out that the Théâtre-Français required actors who could carry modern rôles, such mimes, for instance, as Madame Dorval, Bocage and Frédéric Lemaître. Thiers compromised. He agreed to the admission of Madame Dorval and an understanding that the other players were to be engaged later. He further agreed that Dorval should make her début in *Antony*. Dumas, for his part, agreed to write two pieces a year for the Théâtre-Français, Hugo presumably to be approached on the same terms. So much was settled and Dumas hurried away from the Home Office to acquaint Madame Dorval with her elevation to the national theater. At first matters went smoothly. "The little Dorval," whose contract had not been renewed at the Porte-Saint-

Martin, was delighted. *Antony* was placed in rehearsal, that same *Antony* that had been almost killed by the recalcitrance of Mademoiselle Mars and Firmin. The date of the première was fixed, April 28, 1834. But Dumas had failed to take into account his old enemy, *Le Constitutionnel*. On the morning of the day set for the premiére Dumas's ten-year-old son thrust a fresh copy of *Le Constitutionnel* into his father's hands. The boy had been sent by Goubaux with whom, at that time, he was at school. Dumas unfolded the paper and noticed mention of the Théâtre-Français in the first line of the leading article. He sat down and read it through.

> Public money (thundered *Le Constitutionnel* in a fine academical frenzy) is not intended for the encouragement of a pernicious system. The sum of two hundred thousand francs is only granted to the Théâtre-Français on condition that it shall keep itself pure from all defilement, that the artistes connected with that theater, who are still the best in Europe, shall not debase themselves by lending the support of their talent to those works which are unworthy to be put on the national stage, works the disastrous tendency of which should arouse the anxiety of the Government, for it is responsible for public morality as well as for the carrying out of laws. Well, who would believe it? At this very moment the principal actors of the Porte-Saint-Martin are being transferred to the Théâtre-Français, and silly and dirty melodramas are to be naturalized there, in order to replace the dramatic masterpieces which form an important part of our glorious literature. A plague of blindness appears to have afflicted this unhappy theater. The production of *Antony* is officially announced by *Le Moniteur* for tomorrow, Monday. *Antony* the most brazenly obscene play that has appeared in these obscene times! *Antony,* at the first performance of which respectable fathers of families exclaimed, "For a long time we have not been able to take our daughters to the theater; now, we can no longer take our wives!" So we are going to see at the theater of Corneille, Racine, Molière and Voltaire, a woman flung into an alcove with her mouth gagged; we are to witness violation itself on the national stage; the day of this representation is fixed. What a school of morality to open to the public; what a spectacle to

which to invite the youth of the country; you boast you are elevating them, but they will soon recognize neither rule nor control! It is not its own fault; but that of superior powers, which take no steps to stem this outbreak of immorality. There is no country in the world, however free, where it is permissible to poison the wells of public morality. In ancient republics, the presentation of a dramatic work was the business of the state; it forbade all that could change the national character, undermine the honor of its laws and outrage public modesty.

Dumas whistled to himself, thought of the *Lysistrata,* smiled wryly and hurried off to the Théâtre-Français to supervise the final dress rehearsal of *Antony.* At two o'clock in the afternoon Jouslin de la Salle, the manager, walked up to him and silently presented him with a note. It read:

> The Théâtre-Français is forbidden to play *Antony* tonight.
> Thiers.

Dumas jumped into a cab and was driven to the Home Office.

M. Thiers shrugged his shoulders. He understood how hard it was on Dumas. It was true that *Antony* had been disrupted from its run at the Porte-Saint-Martin. It was also true that Madame Dorval was in a bad fix, that she had no rôle for her debut. But . . . He shrugged his shoulders again. It was not the article in *Le Constitutionnel* that had occasioned this *volte-face* on the part of the Government. It was something else altogether. It was the Budget. "The . . . what?" inquired Dumas. Thiers repeated it: the Budget. "What has the National Budget to do with my play?" asked the dramatist. "I had the whole Chamber against me," explained Thiers. "If *Antony* had been allowed to be played tonight, the Budget would not have passed. Remember that such people as Jay (who had written the leader in *Le Constitutionnel*), Étienne, Viennet and so forth . . . can command a hundred votes in the Chamber, a hundred people who vote like one man. I was pinned into a corner—*Antony* and no budget, or a budget and no *Antony*!" Thiers shrugged again. He concluded: "Ah, my boy, remain a dramatic author and take good care never to become a Minister!"

Dumas brought suit at once against Jouslin de la Salle, as manager of the Théâtre-Français, in the Tribunal de Commerce for breach of contract, and after some delay due to dilatory tactics on the part of the defence, gained ten thousand francs' damages. The decision, in reality, was against the Government and not against the hampered theater. Once again the young dramatist had been treated shabbily by the national home of drama. The moss-covered walls of the classical Bastille still held firm against the assaults of modernity.

The irrespressible young man, after his customary fulminations against those in the seats of the mighty, turned to *Catherine Howard*. This play, rewritten from that *Edith aux longs cheveux* which had slumbered in his escritoire for two years, was, according to its author, an "extra-historic" drama. He meant that the action was purely imaginary although the characters were historical. "I merely used Henry VIII as a nail whereon to hang my picture," he announced in the preface to the printed version. *King Lear* and *Cymbeline* afforded precedents for such an unusual proceeding, he explained. He forgot that Lear and Cymbeline were mythical creatures and that the imagination of the dramatist might do what it desired with them whereas Henry VIII and Catherine Howard were well known historical characters whose existences were fairly familiar to the intelligent public. But Dumas was *toujours audace*. He offered the Parisian public a surprising drama in which Catherine Howard's husband gives her a narcotic to save her from Henry VIII. The bluff King Hal, thinking his prospective bride dead, weds her anyway by placing a ring on her apparently lifeless finger. Catherine, issuing from her trance, becomes feminine enough to desire to reign and accepts the crown. Thereupon the miserable husband uses the narcotic himself to escape the vengeance of the King. The drama ends with the execution of Catherine at the hands of her resuscitated husband,—the curious fellow reappearing as a masked hangman—*le bourreau,* that dismal individual for whom Dumas displayed such affection all his life.

*Catherine Howard* was produced at the Porte-Saint-Martin theater on June 2, 1834, and scored an emphatic success. Delafosse played Henry VIII and Ida Ferrier essayed the rôle of Catherine. The

dependable Lockroy was cast as Ethelwood, Duc de Dierham, the unfortunate husband of Catherine. Dumas went about explaining that in *Antony* he had made a drama of exception, in *Térésa* a drama of generality, in *Richard Darlington* one of politics, in *La Tour de Nesle* a drama of imagination, in *Napoléon* a drama of circumstance, in *Angèle* a drama of manners, in *Henri III et sa Cour* a drama of history and in *Catherine Howard* a drama of extra-history.

Early in the autumn an officious friend placed a copy of *La Musée des Familles* into the hands of Dumas who saw therein an article on *La Tour de Nesle* written by Frédéric Gaillardet. Gaillardet had disappeared into the backwardness of Time during the past two years. He had won his law-suit over *La Tour de Nesle* which had now run some two to three hundred performances, and his name had been displayed prominently on the bills of the sensational drama. The vexed issue of actual authorship had lain dormant during that time. Dumas still counted the play as his own. So did Gaillardet. The article in *La Musée des Familles* brought the dragging argument to its climax. Dumas, reading Gaillardet's historical account of the infamous Tour de Nesle, happened upon a sentence in which the younger playwright declared *La Tour de Nesle* to be his "first and best drama." With more testiness that usual the older man responded in a long letter to Henri Berthoud, director of *La Musée des Familles,* in which he gave his own version of the authorship of the play, asserting flatly that the composition owed little or nothing to Gaillardet's script. Gaillardet immediately answered with his version of the facts, a recapitulation that defiantly affirmed that he, an innocent and helpless young man, had been the victim of a series of felonies on the part of Harel and Dumas. As a matter of fact, the problem is a vexed one and not likely ever to be fully solved. Gaillardet undoubtedly conceived the idea and a part of the structure. Janin added a few improvements, mostly dialogue, to the Gaillardet version. Dumas unquestionably rewrote the entire piece and moulded it into a clever and sensational melodrama. Harel indubitably attempted to cheat Gaillardet out of his share of the honors. All except Janin were at fault. Gaillardet had a collaborator forced upon him but he was too inexperienced to comprehend that his drama was worthless until it

was made into a play—a technical feat he could not perform. Dumas slighted the young man too much, calmly appropriating his idea and, with that superabundance of thoughtless acquisition that was his, claiming all the honors. Harel was "that rascal" always, placing clever business shifts before integrity. There was only one answer to the question now. Dumas issued a challenge to Gaillardet.

The two men met at Saint-Mandé about noon on October 17, 1834. Dumas, accompanied by two acquaintances who were acting for him, Longpré and Maillan, arrived first, breathing fire and fury. Shortly afterward Gaillardet, clothed entirely in black, reached the duelling ground with his two seconds, Frédéric Soulié and Fontan. Alexandre Bixio made his appearance as surgeon to the event. There was the usual strutting to and fro, and Dumas, who had set his heart on swords (they were safer), made a final plea for them. But Gaillardet as the challenged party possessed the right of choice and he insisted on pistols. Dumas began to brood upon the fact that it was very difficult to hit a skinny young man garmented in dark clothing. He put forth a last despairing request for swords (the seconds could always halt a duel with swords before it reached too perilous a situation and bullets had an unpleasant way of reaching mortal spots) but Gaillardet was adamantine. Pistols it would have to be. Dumas, who had no right to question the challenged party's choice of weapons, ordered a five franc piece spun in the air and a declaration to be written down that the challenged party's seconds refused to permit the selection of weapons to be decided by lot. This was done and a perturbed dramatist with crinkly hair took his position. The signal was given and Gaillardet, pale and determined, ran to the limit line and waited for Dumas who advanced slowly, ziz-zagging as much as possible to embarrass the aim of his opponent. Gaillardet fired but his excited aim was so bad that Dumas did not even hear the whistle of the bullet. He waggled a hand to the four witnesses to show that he had not been hit. Then he fired in his turn, discharging his pistol at random, he explained later, because he could find no spot of white on the black-clothed antagonist at which to aim. It did not occur to him to aim directly at the black figure who was so few yards away. After these discharges Dumas demanded that the pistols be loaded again and Gaillardet, much to Dumas's unrest, seconded the request.

The attendants, however, refused to permit the duel to go any further. Dumas then suggested that swords be used. Gaillardet promptly demurred. A few solemn phrases were mouthed and the combatants climbed into their respective cabs and drove back to Paris. Honor was satisfied. Until 1851 Frédéric Gaillardet's name alone was on the play-bills of *La Tour de Nesle.*

## IV

Restlessless had disturbed Dumas long before his *opéra bouffe* encounter with Frédéric Gaillardet, a restlessness that the excitement of rehearsals, political exasperations, prose publications and social febrilities could not dissipate. He had eaten the strange fruit of travel and the flavor of it was pleasant. He was now to become a citizen of the world. During the thirty-six years of his life that remained he was to occupy the majority of them in traveling, in observing foreign places and in setting down his impressions in that long and amusing series of *impressions de voyage* that had started with the Switzerland volume.

Shortly after the duel with Gaillardet he was off on the real beginning of these journeys—the Swiss trip had been no more than a forced prologue—accompanied by Godefroy Jadin, Amaury Duval and a dripping-mouthed bulldog by the name of Mylord. The Midi of France was Dumas's objective and during the winter he explored that pleasant terrain with all the assiduity of the enthusiastic amateur. Through Aigues-Mortes, Arles, Tarascon, Beaucaire, Nimes, Avignon, Valence, Orange, Vaucluse and Marseilles, including a trip to Corsica, he passed searching out the centers of architectural and antiquarian interest, talking to natives, studying their habits and filling notebook after notebook. He avoided the towns where the new monster of machinery ruled, for he hated and feared the callous insensibility of iron. In the Rhone valley although he was a meager drinker he revelled in the wine of Saint-Péray. At Cavaillon he bargained for juicy melons, offering his works in exchange. At Nimes he walked by night in the ruined amphitheater *à la* Chateaubriand, striving to revive in his imagination the vanished society that had shouted itself hoarse in this stone arena. It was here that Mylord, dripping hate

and poison from his fat jaws, strove to attack the bulls during the branding. At Mornas the self-confident traveler experienced difficulties in comprehending the peculiar Provençal dialect of the natives and was tempted to imitate an Englishman who cackled when he desired an egg. At Avignon, he insisted on sleeping in room number three in the Hôtel du Palais-Royal where his godfather, Maréchal Brune, had been assassinated by the inflamed populace. At Arles another burst of sentimentality produced a short fit of religious humility and he offered fervent prayers before the little wooden saint he had blithely stolen from a church in Baux. So he passed through the Midi accompanied by his amused entourage, dividing his time between melons and prayers, saints and bull-branding, wine and sentimental speeches about Maréchal Brune. Wherever he went he collected stories, anecdotes, bits of local color, tatters of knowledge and historical facts. The notebooks swelled with a heterogenous treasure.

No sooner had he returned to Paris, taken a few turns about the boulevards, looked into several theaters, shuffled together a number of short stories for a prospective volume to be published by Dumont, kissed the white hands of "the little Dorval" and Mademoiselle Mars, and reveled in the plump charms of Ida Ferrier, than he longed to get away again. This time he would broaden his travels, cross frontiers and walk through the streets of Rome. Early in 1835 he departed, having accomplished nothing in Paris, accompanied as before by Jadin and the cat-terrorizing Mylord. Scattering money right and left he passed through Hyères and viewed from the misty shore the dark islands of Port Cros and Porquerolles; through Draguignan where he saw the mound of the prehistoric inhabitants of the Mediterranean coast; through Grasse where he meditated on Fragonard who was born there. He passed through Cannes and observed St. Marguerite in the distance crowned by the dark fortress where the Man in the Iron Mask had once been immured and to whose crumbled door an as yet uncreated hero named d'Artagnan was to come; through Golfe Juan, dreaming for a moment beside the quietly lapping water over which had come the Emperor from Elba twenty years before; through Nice, the birthplace of Masséna, and so along the scarped Corniche to the mountainous frontier of Italy. Turning back for a moment he recollected pleasant incidents that had marked this swing

through France. He had discovered the Mediterranean and even issued a manifesto about it. At Marseilles he had eaten Gargantuan dinners with the jolly Méry and listened to his amusing tale of *La Chasse au Chastre*. A convict had hailed him in the little seaport of Toulon and claimed Mademoiselle Mars as a mutual acquaintance. The fellow had been footman to the famous actress and was now on his way to Genoa after having stolen the jewels of the tragedienne. It had all been amusing, instructive and unusual, a sea of life and historical memories from which he had fished up many an outlandish murex to grace the rich fare of the *impressions de voyage*. It was time to cross the frontier.

Genoa was charming but he had not been long in the birthplace of Christopher Columbus before he was visited by emissaries of King Charles-Albert of Sardinia who politely ordered him out of the state. He was, it seemed, under suspicion of being a radical. Both irritated and pleased, Dumas sailed for Naples. There he planted his headquarters, having changed his identity to that of an M. Guichard whose passport he was using. But the idea of the boisterous playwright concealing himself was ridiculous. Though for a time he masqueraded as M. Guichard and wandered about the countryside viewing ruins and listening to stories about brigands, it was not for long. He stood out too prominently on the landscape. His personality was too pronounced. He was too fond of hinting his identity. The expected therefore happened when, one morning, he was awakened by a Commissionaire de Police and carried off to his office and submitted to an interrogatory. It was not so easy, after all, for a talkative son of a Napoleonic General to peregrinate through the Italian states. Why was he traveling under a false name? Dumas explained it was because King Ferdinand would not let him travel under his own. It was a very good excuse and ought to have silenced the officious policeman. It did nothing of the sort. What was his right name? Dumas announced it with gusto: Alexandre Dumas. Had he any titles? Dumas drew himself up. He certainly had. His grandfather had received the title of Marquis from Louis XIV and his father had refused that of Count from Napoleon. He stretched the fact a bit in this last affirmation, but according to Dumasian logic if the Emperor had not hated his father he might have given him the title of Count.

All the Maréchaux had possessed it. And General Dumas had missed the baton sheerly because of his Republican sentiments. Therefore, he had, so to speak, refused the title. The weary police officer remarked: "Why don't you assume your title?" Dumas answered: "Because I can get on just as well without it." This crusher did not deter the officer from making some remarks about prison. Whereupon Dumas produced various letters, one from the French minister of public instruction which commended the traveler to the kind ministrations of foreign officials. The officer shrugged his shoulders and within a short period of time Dumas, Jadin and the bulldog were on their way to Rome, where it was to be hoped hospitality would prove warmer.

In the Holy City he was granted an audience with Pope Gregory XVI. The day was one of excitement and dismay for Dumas. He had no uniform and the lack of gold stripes and plumes disheartened him greatly. He was still more disheartened when he disgorged his dress suit from his luggage and found it lamentably worn about the elbows and knees. His legs tottered beneath him as he ascended the steps of the Vatican. Pope Gregory XVI was graciousness itself and smiled as Dumas kissed his toe and exclaimed, *"Tibi et Petro!"* The conversation between the two men was amusing. Gregory XVI delicately reproached Dumas for being a wandering child and further declared that the stage should be a pulpit. The author of *Antony* blamed the corruption of the theater on Voltaire and Beaumarchais. He for his part would like nothing better than to be a missionary in the theater but he would be instantly sacrificed if he attempted any such quixotic rôle. However, if His Holiness would encourage him . . . Dumas dropped his eyes modestly. He was already meditating a subject for a grand moral play. It was about Caligula. "You might introduce the Early Christians," remarked the Pope naïvely. Dumas was uncertain. There might be difficulties about the lions. Still . . . he would see. As a matter of fact *Caligula* had been suggested by Anicet Bourgeois as a possible framework to display a trained horse owned by the Cirque Franconi. Gregory XVI still smiling, gave Dumas his benediction and several rosaries and crucifixes and the solemn playwright backed out of the holy presence. A few days later—he had departed from Rome and was at Civita-

Castellana—Dumas was apprehended by Papal carabiniers and escorted to the border of the papal states. The Pope might welcome him but the Pope's officials would do nothing of the sort. Dumas discovered that he had been denounced from Paris as a writer of revolutionary plays and a member of the Polish Committee. With some bravado he admitted the revolutionary plays but he swore up and down that he had nothing to do with the Polish Committee.

Florence was his next destination and here he found the refuge that was to be his second home for the rest of his life. Next to Paris he adored Florence. *"Florence,"* he exclaimed, *"est l'Eldorado de la liberté individuelle."* The month was June, the most charming of all months in Northern Italy, and the ancient city was preparing for the fêtes of St. John. Flowers abounded, crowds of laughing and gesticulating merry-makers filled the streets, music sounded. It was all charming. It was even delightful to hear the many clocks in the city strike the same hour for twenty minutes. "Why is that?" asked Dumas, "why do they not coördinate time better here?" A nearby Tuscan responded: *"Que diable avez-vous besoin de savoir l'heure qu'il est?"* It was true. Dumas settled down for some weeks of fine eating, short jaunts to neighboring sites of interest and pleasurable converse with the natives. The spell of Florence crept into his heart. He would return year after year to this pleasant spot. But even so he could not remain planted for any length of time, and charming though Florence was, it was not many weeks before he was planning an escape to other places. Together with Jadin and Mylord he engaged a boat and sailed about Sicily and Southern Italy, even visiting Naples again. He studied the Calabrian towns and expended a wealth of classical quotations over Paestum and its vanished roses. He made himself ill eating macaroni and polenta. He was caught in a terrific storm at sea and enjoyed unexpected sensations. He climbed volcanic slopes, Ætna, Stromboli, and Mylord burned his paws on the way. Mylord, indeed, was a problem at times. He killed so many cats that it was necessary for Dumas to draw up a tariff of damages, paying off the indignant Sicilians at the rate of one franc per slaughtered feline. At length, nearly two years having elapsed since he had gazed upon the towers of Paris, Dumas started toward the French capital. Waiting eagerly for him was the plump Ida whom he had

almost forgotten, his crippled mother who ventured forth very seldom now, and a tall boy of twelve who called him father.

## V

Dumas worked as he played, with an unremitting assiduity, and it was not long before he had regained the ground in Paris that two years' absence had sacrificed. He renewed old friendships, cultivated new editors and play producers, crept again into the public prints, manifested himself in the popular cafés and studios and scattered his *bon mots* about the city. In March a five-act piece called *Le Marquis de Brunoy* was produced at the Théâtre des Variétés. Dumas, though unnamed, had a hand in it. At the same time he was whipping into shape more ambitious efforts, among them *Kean,* written in collaboration with Théaulon and Frédéric de Courcy, and *Don Juan de Marana,* a mystery play. Parallel with these dramas was a volume of romanticized historical incidents called *Isabel de Bavière,* eight chapters of which had appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes.* It was during this period that Dumas had a falling out with Buloz and ceased to contribute to his magazine.

*Don Juan de Marana* was presented at the Porte-Saint-Martin theater on April 30, 1836. In a sense it marked the return of Dumas to the Parisian stage, for it had been two years less a month since his last acknowledged drama, *Catherine Howard,* had been produced. The new play proved to be a curious resumption of activities, for it was a *"mystère,"* a symbolical effort somewhat *à la* Calderon, a conglomeration of spirits sacred and profane with the scene shifting from heaven to earth and once even to hell. Don Juan, he of Marana and not the libertine of Tenorio, was fought over by good and evil spirits. As usual Dumas, when he was in a hurry to produce something, deliberately purloined a number of situations from other dramatists, and the scoffing Parisian critics observed to their mingled irritation and amusement, a musty and hollow mosaic based upon Prosper Mérimée's *Les Ames du Purgatoire* and exhibiting a decided indebtedness to Molière, Shakespeare, Goethe, Hoffmann and Alfred de Musset. One critic, the representative of the *Journal des Débats,* outlined an amusing sketch of these ransacked authors appearing in

phantom form one after the other like the ghosts in *Richard III* to reproach Dumas. The light-fingered dramatist, however, went merrily on his way, rejoiced in the spectacle of Ida Ferrier in the twin rôles of the Good Angel and Sister Martha—Ida had been waiting a long time for a rôle worthy of her plump charms—and turned finally from the problematical success of *La chute d'un ange* (the sub-title of *Don Juan de Marana*) to a subject which Théaulon seems to have conceived, *Kean, ou Désordre et Génie. Don Juan de Marana* was actually no more than another betrayal of Dumas's intense desire to write poetry and his inability to triumph in such a form.

*Kean, ou Désordre et Génie,* produced at the Théâtre des Variétés on August 31, 1836, proved to be a decided success and a drama that was to hold the stage for many years, thanks to the mimetic skill of Frédéric Lemaître. It may be regarded as the last of the sequels to *Antony,* a throwback to those studies of egotism that had placed Dumas as an important French dramatist. This time it was a vivid transcript of the artistic genius, that most arbitrary of all egotisms, for Dumas, taking the figure of the great English actor, Edmund Kean, refashioned him into a peculiarly French person, a character who studied the effects of human passions on himself in order to represent them with fierce fidelity in the mimic world of the theater. Kean, therefore, is shown as a link between social extremes, a man carousing in the "Coal Hole" with such questionable old friends as John Cooks, *le boxeur,* and Ketty *la blonde;* and then as a reverse to this picture, mingling with the aristocracy, defying Lord Mewill (Dumas's English names were always astonishing) making passionate love to the Comtesse de Koeffeld and finally insulting the Prince of Wales from the stage of Drury Lane. This play is another example of Dumas's skill in dramaturgy; it proved its long vitality through Charles Cochlan's adaptation of it, *The Royal Box,* a drama revived as recently as 1928 in New York. Dumas seems to have been unable to place Ida Ferrier in *Kean* although he had been extolling her merits and begging pleasant squibs about her from the journalists. After the semi-débâcle of *Don Juan de Marana* she was to be found at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal for a short time, where on May 26th she appeared in *Anna* and *Les Deux Frères* and on September 15th in *Grain de sable.*

With the success of *Kean* behind him and *Isabel de Bavière* just

issued from the press of Dumont, Dumas could afford to relax for the moment. The desire for a brief vacation from the whirl of Paris dominated him. The opportunity came in the form of an invitation from the young Duc d'Orléans to be royalty's guest at the camp in Compiègne. The end of 1836 found Dumas installed in the home of a guardsman's widow, Madame d'Arras, at St. Corneille. Whenever the duc desired him at the château he sent down an invitation. This cultivation of the Duc d'Orléans led directly to a tentative *rapprochement* between Dumas and Louis-Philippe.

One episode at Compiègne impressed itself vividly on the mind of the sentimental dramatist. He had accompanied the young heir on a hunting expedition and at its conclusion took part in a cold repast that was laid out on the bright grass adjoining the chateau. The Duc begged Dumas to carve a cold pheasant that reposed before them but the flattered guest refused and passed the knife to Pasquier, doctor and surgeon to the duc. Pasquier acquitted himself skillfully, and d'Orléans, fallen into a state of abstract melancholy, observed the shining knife and the dissected bird. His entourage regarded him questioningly. "What am I thinking?" remarked the prince as he roused himself. "I am thinking that in his line of duty as my doctor Pasquier will one day arrange me as he has that pheasant." Less than six years later the duc, fatally injured in a carriage accident, died in the arms of Pasquier, and it was this celebrated doctor who performed the necessary autopsy on the body.

On May 30th the Duc d'Orléans espoused the Princess Hélène of Mecklenbourg-Schwerin and on the eleventh of June the marriage took place, inaugurated by a grand fête in the Musée Historique of Versailles. Louis-Philippe celebrated the momentous occasion by granting several decorations and when he saw Alexandre Dumas's name on the list, suggested by the duc, he promptly ordered it removed. Louis-Philippe had not recovered from his irritation at his former employee at the Palais-Royal and he did not intend to grant the cross of the Legion of Honor to him. Two incidents, however, caused him to change his mind. Victor Hugo's name was also on the list and hearing that the name of his old comrade had been

removed he forgot their differences long enough to announce that he would not appear at the fête for his decoration unless this injustice was repaired. Also, three days before the ceremony the good-natured Duc d'Orléans secreted Dumas in one of the galleries at Versailles and when Louis-Philippe passed through, the playwright, forgetting his Republican ferocity, rushed forward and prostrated himself before the King. Louis-Philippe, half-pleased and half-irritated, leaned forward and, in imitation of Napoleon, pinched Dumas's ear and muttered, "Grown-up schoolboy!" The next day the name of Dumas was replaced on the honors list.

When the crosses were presented, however, Dumas experienced the tortures of a humiliated man. There was a grand cross for Arago; Thierry and Victor Hugo received officers' crosses; Dumas was handed a simple chevalier's decoration. At the same time another chevalier's decoration was presented to some obscure person present. Dumas put his cross in his pocket instead of immediately hanging it at his buttonhole. There was no reason for this exhibition of pique on his part. He had been away from Paris two years. His return had been signalized by the solitary success of *Kean,* a drama essentially popular in its qualities. His Republican ranting had estranged him from the King. Actually he had much to be thankful for. The Parisian populace had taken him to its inconsistent heart again and he had achieved a fair degree of intimacy with the Duc d'Orléans. Louis-Philippe had tweaked his ear, suffered his presence at the royal fêtes and, at the instigation of the duc, to be sure, admitted him to the Legion of Honor. The tactical errors he had committed as a boastful adherent of the Republican cause appeared to have been forgotten. It was his vanity that developed his feeling of grievance against fortune. Curiously enough, this vanity seems to have been devoid of the elements of personal jealousy. He could witness with smiling approbation the heaping of honors upon others. Victor Hugo, he felt, deserved an officer's cross; it was the imagined neglect of himself that perturbed him. He showed his petulance, but his grievance did not last long. Before many weeks had passed he put his injured pride behind him, started an *opéra comique* with Gérard de Nerval and adjusted himself again to the continued composition of *Caligula.*

## VI

The sallow-faced Buloz, who had recently been appointed commissioner of the Théâtre-Français, surrendered at last to the urgent pleading and angry ultimatums of Dumas and drew up a contract for Ida Ferrier. He engaged her at an annual salary of four thousand francs for the period of one year to run from the first of October. Dumas was delighted. He had engineered puffs for her in the daily press, forced her rotund charms upon the ecstatically minded Théophile Gautier and otherwise pushed her forward in the semi-Bohemian life of his milieu. Ida does not seem to have deserved it all. She appears to have been tempestuous in temperament, jealous-minded and grievously limited as an actress. Her beauty was of the over-ripe variety—perhaps a welcome contrast to the meager charms of the more famous Parisiennes of the day—that could arouse Théophile Gautier to such panegyrics as: *"Que dire des cheveux? Ils sont les plus fins et les plus abondants du monde! Des mains? Adorables! Des pieds? Minces et délicats! De la figure? Ravissante! Du cou? Blanc et renflé comme celui d'un cygne! Des épaules? Divines! De la taille? Enfin nous y voilà! Mlle. Ida a en luxe et en exoès ce que la moitié des femmes de Paris n'a pas du tout; aussi les maigres de la trouver trop grasse, trop puissante, et de dire que Mlle. Ida n'a que la tête."* And so forth and so on until the bewildered reader sinks beneath this flood of honey. Other critics muttered comments on Ida's too evident callipygous charms.

Ida was to make her début in *Caligula* and by late summer rehearsals were in progress at the Théâtre-Français. Buloz determined to do his best by the play and dispensed no less than thirty-nine thousand francs (besides a *prime* of five thousand to Dumas as author) on the production. There were several reasons for this generosity. *Caligula* was, strange as it may seem, the first première of a full-length play by Dumas at the Théâtre-Français since *Henri III et sa Cour* in 1829. Since that first triumph the national house of drama had produced only the one-act *Le Mari de la Veuve* in 1832. Dumas had not forgotten the heartbreaking negotiations with the Théâtre-Français concerning *Christine* and *Antony* and the engagement of Mademoiselle Dorval. It was necessary that the theater make a decided gesture of

friendliness toward him. The theater, for its own part, realized the need of a *rapprochement,* for Dumas was too famous to ignore, and most important of all, he could fill the spectators' seats. Every effort therefore was made to render *Caligula* a success. On October 31, *Piquillo,* the operetta Dumas had written in collaboration with Gérard de Nerval and which had been set to music by Hippolyte Monpou, was presented at the Opéra-Comique. Its success was slight and proved but an interlude between the rehearsals of *Caligula.*

*Caligula* was produced on December 26, 1837, at the Théâtre-Français with Ligier as the Emperor and the fair Ida as Stella. It bored a large audience from the first, and long before Messalina's melodramatic cry, *"A moi l'empire et l'empéreur!"* Dumas knew he had written another failure. He had counted heavily upon the favorable reception of this tragedy which was mainly concerned with the conversion by a Christian maiden of her pagan lover, and he was bewildered by the disastrous reality. There was color and movement in this *pièce à décor* and the author could hardly realize his failure. At the line, *"Je te baptise au nom de la Trinité sainte,"* a voice from the gallery roared, "Ah, the Jesuit!" It was followed by a storm of hissing. Jadin, friend as ever to Dumas, dragged out one of the most persistent hissers and discovered from him that he was one of the regular *claque* and that he had received instructions from those actors of the Théâtre-Français who were not in the production to do all he could to damn *Caligula.* Dumas, who had "squared" the leader of the *claque*—an act not so much of bribery as necessity in those days—was furious at this treachery. For days afterward whenever a smart buck on the boulevards wanted to express his boredom he would say, "You caligulate me, my dear boy." Jokes about Ida's callipygous charms aroused guffaws in the cafés. The unfortunate tragedy ran but twenty nights at the Théâtre-Français, each time at a loss, and Mademoiselle Ida was cast in no more rôles there, her contract being quietly dropped. Once again Dumas had tasted the torment of humiliation in the Bastille of Racine. After the première he and Ida went home, and viewed somewhat gloomily the bronze by Barye which had been delivered with the cards of the Duc and Duchesse d'Orléans.

The cold winter winds that blew along the boulevards and lashed

at the steamed windows of the cafés brought more than the chill of the season with them. They brought the chill of death as well. The first months of 1838 Dumas passed in quarreling with Ida, excusing and vindicating *Caligula,* arranging two short tales, *Pauline* and *Pascal Bruno,* in a volume for Dumont which he called *La Salle d'Armes,* and concocting a sequel to James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pilot* which appeared under the title of *Le Capitaine Paul.* Dauzats, the artist, had given him the idea for this last work. It was hurried and his heart was not in it. He was brooding over his Odyssey at the Théâtre-Français. He was the unfortunate Odysseus steering vaguely upon dangerous rocks. Now and then he went to the Arsenal and called upon his old friend, Charles Nodier. Charles was always the same, kindly, sympathetic, a spiritual father who smiled at the vagaries of the dusky son. But even the Arsenal was not the same. The old group had broken up, new faces were to be seen, and Dumas began to feel that he was no longer a young man. He was thirty-six years old. He had nearly twenty plays behind him and seven works in prose. His son was fourteen years old, a tall boy whom he considered removing from boarding-school. It would be pleasant to have Alexandre *fils* near him. His daughter, Marie-Alexandre, was seven years old and she sometimes came to stay with him although Ida Ferrier hated her and made it unpleasant for the child. Somewhere in the misty world outside of his interests were Marie-Catherine Lebay, Mélanie Waldor, Bell Krebsamer and even "the little Dorval." They were all growing old. He felt intensely depressed as he sat at his desk in the rue Bleu and heard the chill winds with their prophecy of death rise to the hurly-burly of March blasts and sink again to the pleasanter breezes of April. The chestnut buds came out on the trees along the boulevards and the sun shone again. May melted into June and the bright-skirted women walked in the Tuileries Gardens as they had walked during the year of the cholera epidemic. July with the wild festivities of its Bastille Day moved toward the torridness of August and the prophecy of death was fulfilled.

An excited messenger knocked at the doors of the house in the rue Bleu on the first day of August. He brought word that Madame Dumas had been stricken down for a second time with apoplexy, this time with *apoplexie foudroyante.* Dumas ran to the Faubourg du

Roule and found his mother senseless. His cries seemed to pierce her dulled brain and she opened her eyes and appeared to recognize him. The distracted man seized a pen and scribbled a note to the Duc d'Orléans and then sat down by his mother's bed and watched the ominous course of the malady. Marie Elizabeth Labouret seemed to be withering away before his eyes. An hour passed and he heard the scraping wheels of a carriage pause before the door and an instant later a voice saying, *"De la part du prince royal."* Dumas started up and went into the next room where he found the *valet de chambre* of the Duc d'Orléans waiting to inquire about Madame Dumas. "Very badly," replied Dumas in reply to the man's question, "There is no hope for her." The servant hesitated and then explained that the Duc himself was below in his carriage. Dumas hurried down the stairs. The door of the carriage was open, and staggering toward it the playwright fell with his head on the knees of the prince royal. "I do not know how long I remained there," Dumas wrote in his memorial of the duc several years later. "All I know is that the night was beautiful and serene and that, through the pane of the opposite door, I saw the glittering stars of Heaven."

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE PORTAL TO MONTE CRISTO

### I

Dumas moved forlornly through a labyrinth of obsessive memories for several days after the death of his mother. He realized that he had neglected her during recent years and his guilty conscience perturbed and aroused him to a painful self-examination. While he had paraded through Time and partaken of all the sensorial pleasures of existence he had relegated her to the dismal loneliness of her chambers. Life had broadened out for him as it had narrowed for her: which was, he realized bitterly, the law of the young and the old. Yet he had always possessed the comfortable feeling that she was there somewhere just outside of his orbit, that he might turn a corner or two, climb a few narrow flights of stairs, open a door, and find her, quiet, crippled, smiling at the sunlight that poured through the window, and waiting with that sublime patience that is the bulwark of old people against despair. She would be waiting for him, of course. Because she *had* been there he had not missed her. The fact that he did not see her was a trivial fact. The consciousness of her existence was enough. But now she was no longer there and he missed her terribly, missed her with that agitation of mingled shame and longing that was a part of his inconsistent nature. Tears blinded him as he recalled her patient expression and her self-denials. Amaury Duval had completed a drawing of Madame Dumas shortly after her death, and Dumas, observing it on the desk before him, drew it toward him and inscribed beneath it these lines:

*Oh! mon Dieu! dans ce monde où toute bouche nie,*
*Où chacun foule aux pieds les Tables de la Loi,*

*Vous m'avez entendu, pendant son agonie,*
*Prier à deux genoux, le coeur ardent de foi.*
*Vous m'avez vu, mon Dieu, sur la funèbre route*
*Où la mort me courbait devant un crucifix,*
*Et vous avez compté les pleurs qui, goutte à goutte,*
*Ruisselaient de mes yeux aux pieds de votre Fils.*
*Je demandais, mon Dieu, que, moins vite ravie,*
*Vous retardiez l'instant de mon dernier adieu;*
*Pour racheter ses jours, je vous offrais ma vie,*
*Vous n'avez pas voulu, soyez béni, mon Dieu!*

How sorrowful it all was and how sympathetic his friends had been to him! Amaury Duval, Jadin, Gérard de Nerval, even Victor Hugo. He had written to Hugo, a trifle timidly, inviting him to assist at the funeral obsequies and Hugo's response had been immediate. "I would have wished a less sad occasion to shake your hand," wrote the Sun-God. "You will see tomorrow, as soon as we gaze into each other's face, that you were wrong ever to have doubted me. I will be at your house tomorrow at the hour you name. You have done well to count on me. It is a return of noble confidence worthy of you and worthy of me. Your friend, Victor." So they had stood shoulder to shoulder while the body, light as a child's, had been borne from the room, and ridden in the same coach behind the black-plumed horses.

Dumas's sad reveries over his mother awakened memories of his father. How steadfastly she had stood beside that worthy man and comforted him as he sat wearily in the poverty-stricken rooms in Villers-Cotterets and gazed silently at the dusty sword on the wall! Mont-Cenis! The bridge of Clausen! The twisting streets of Cairo! He had been a hero, a dusky Hercules, *le diable noir*. A pride tinged with sadness swelled in the bosom of Dumas. All France was scattered with marble memorials to the maréchaux who had fought with the Emperor but nowhere was there a statue of General Alexandre Dumas. There should be one, a lofty figure, but not in thankless and short-memoried France. It should be in the land of his birth, in the island of black men like him, in Haiti. Under the stress of emotion Dumas addressed an open letter to the Haitians (obviously a reply to a group of Haitians in France who had sent him their condolences

on the death of Madame Dumas, and, perhaps, awakened this chain of thought) suggesting methods by which a subscription might be raised with which to commission and erect a statue in Haiti to the memory of General Alexandre Dumas. The son thought that the subscriptions should be limited to men of color, to negroes, and that each one should donate no more than a franc. The project came to nothing but the gesture was not without its pathetic side.

The warm days succeeded one another and Dumas's first passion of sorrow gradually lifted. He could not resist the appeal of the Parisian streets and theaters. For instance, the Bayadères were exciting the public with their strange music and Oriental dances. While Saravana played the cymbals and lifted his mysterious eyes upward Tillé, Amany, Soundiren and Rangoun danced, their brown bodies giving off a pleasant scent of musk. Jullien, the *chef d'orchestre* at the Café Turc, conducted his famous *Valse de Rosita* and the bourgeoisie of the Marais whirled to it. At the Théâtre-Français a dark young Jewess named Rachel had just made her debut in *Horace.* La Taglioni had recently been reëngaged to dance at the Opéra and Fanny Essler was delighting the critics, among them Théophile Gautier, with her versions of the mazurka and the *cracovienne.* Along the boulevards passed animated crowds, the men—influenced by the Saint-Simonians—wearing their hair long and the women swaying beneath the First Empire turbans which had come again into fashion. All of this was pleasing and yet it left Dumas still restless and perturbed in spirit. Finally, he decided that he would go away for a time, that he would forget his grief in the stranger diversions of foreign cities. He had but little money and in order to raise more he dramatized *Le Capitaine Paul,* a few days' work, and took the script to his old friend, Porcher, who accepted it somewhat reluctantly as collateral for a loan. With the welcome cash safely stowed away Dumas made immediate preparations for departure. First of all, there were long discussions with Gérard de Nerval. Dumas had decided that it should be Germany this time, the blue smiling waters of the Rhine and the sweet sentimentalities of the blond Teutons who drank beer and read Goethe and adored music. *Le bon Gérard,* who knew all about Germany, promised to meet Dumas there; Ida Ferrier hastily purchased a traveling outfit and some new gowns; Dumas secured several letters

of introduction that would open important doors to him; and the way was clear for another auspicious departure from the city by the Seine.

On August twentieth Dumas, accompanied by the fair Ida, started for the pleasant shores of the Rhine by way of Belgium. He went for three reasons. The nomadic instinct, suppressed for some time, asserted its dominance again. His grief over his mother's death and the débâcle of *Caligula* made Paris unbearable for him. Germany, the land of Goethe and Schiller and Lorelei and enchanted castles dreaming on sunny crags, called him in the sweet voice of romance. It was delightful to be on the road once more, to be jouncing over country thoroughfares in the creaking diligence while placid towns, their red roofs shining, and brown-armed reapers in the hot sun slowly slid by. The weather was flawless and his heavy spirits lifted as he gazed out at the rich green of the meadows over which the battalions of Napoleon had once tramped, listened abstractedly to the pleasant chatter of Ida Ferrier whose essentially urban mind discovered infinite curiosities in the panoramic farmlands, and anticipated with agreeable expectations the meeting with Gérard de Nerval who was to join him at Frankfort-on-Main. The gentle and fantastic spirit of de Nerval appealed to him just as his own gusty, humor-loving and active temperament charmed the unworldly and dreamlike mind of the poet. He was six years older than *le bon Gérard,* more experienced in the ways of the social world but far less attuned to those mysteries of the spirit, those maladies of the soul that were to force de Nerval into an insane asylum within three years. Already the love of the gods cast its eery light over the poet. The communion between the two men was unusual because they were poles apart, yet it was not difficult to understand.

Brussels delighted Dumas. He engaged rooms at the Hôtel de la Reine de Suède, ambitiously studied and made notes on the façade and interior of Van Ruisbroek's Hôtel de Ville, gazed up at the soaring towers of Sainte-Gudule, stood solemnly before the recently erected tomb of Comte Frédéric de Mérode in the exquisite chapel of Notre-Dame de la Délivrance, laughed at the Rabelaisian spectacle of the famous fountain of the Manneken-Piss, visited the *palais* of the Prince

d'Orange, and wandered through the curious streets, dining in the tiny restaurants and discussing Belgian history with the red-faced natives. Garbed in his finest coat and his tallest hat he called upon King Leopold and was referred to the summer palace at Laeken, to which place he immediately traveled and was cordially received by the ruler. He made the usual pilgrimage to the field of Waterloo and meditated, as all Frenchmen do, on the reasons for God's championship of Wellington and Blücher. At Anvers he stood with bowed head before the tomb of Peter Paul Rubens and at Bruges, before the brown belfry in the market-place, he recalled the Foresters of Flanders, Lyderic du Bucq and Guy de Dampierre. Receiving an invitation from King Leopold he attended the Jubilee of Malines, a religious celebration honoring Notre Dame d'Hanswyck who had, according to ecclesiastical authorities, evinced her predilection for the people of Malines for eight hundred and fifty years. He went to Liège and inspected the formidable fortifications of the city that had once been destroyed by Charles the Bold. At Aix-la-Chapelle, the gateway to Teutonic lands, he held his head high in memory of Charlemagne. It was time to enter Germany, to sail along the blue waters of the Rhine, to meet Gérard de Nerval at Frankfort-on-Main. This Belgian tour had impressed on Dumas again the spectacular qualities and lifting romance of historical times.

He arrived in Cologne at ten o'clock in the evening, tired and soiled with travel, and discovered that the unlucky wanderer who enters a hotel during the hours *indues* is caught like a mouse in a trap. The door closes behind him and he must remain captive until the next morning. He cannot go out again. Dumas, somewhat of a noctambulist, resented this for he desired to have his first glimpse of the great cathedral by moonlight. However, the imposing and unfinished bulk proved quite as astounding by day and the excited traveler passed many hours wandering through the aisles, watching the craftsmen laboring like bees within a huge hive, climbing to the dome and observing the surrounding streets from that inspiring height, and gathering the many legends that clustered about this Gothic temple whose corner-stone had been laid by Archbishop Conrad of Hostaden in 1248. The Medieval Ages seemed to blossom into a phantom life in Cologne. Robert of Deutz, Caesarius of Heis

terbach, Duns Scotus and Blessed Albertus Magnus traversed the winding streets again. The armed burghers marched out to the bloody field of Worringen and the enraged weavers rose furiously against the tyrannical patricians. Dumas would like to have remained longer in the city where Clovis had been crowned but his rendezvous with de Nerval drew near and he departed reluctantly from the ghosts of the past. He passed through Coblentz and admired the gloomy walls of Ehrenbreitstein and eventually reached Frankfort-on-Main. There was no fantastic Gérard there. However, there was the famous *Pfarrturm* of the Cathedral of Saint Bartholomew to admire, the Liebfrauenkirche, and the Church of the Teutonic Knights. Through the streets patrolled the Prusso-Austrian troops who had been there since the riot of 1833. The populace had heard of the great Dumas and the noble families of the city were assiduous in paying attentions to him. Dumas, with Ida Ferrier on his arm, passed gaily through the social functions and made majestic appearances at the theater. He squandered money (the cash he had borrowed from Porcher), exhibited Ida in costly and startling costumes, ate enormously, and, incidentally, paid his respects to the house where Goethe had written a portion of *Werther*. After some weeks news came from Gérard de Nerval. He was stranded in Strasbourg with a single franc. *Le bon Gérard,* after all, was a true poet.

Money was hastily forwarded, and, after some days, Gérard de Nerval turned up in Frankfort-on-Main, none the worse for his penniless predicament. He greeted Dumas with a sweet smile, kissed the white hand of Ida Ferrier, and began his rambles about the city. There were discussions as to the possibilities of collaborating on one or more plays, and, because of de Nerval's intimate knowledge of German life, letters, and history, both men decided to limit their efforts to a Teutonic theme. A drama based on Karl-Ludwig Sand's sensational murder of Kotzebue in 1819 appealed particularly to Dumas and he insisted on visiting the scene of the assassination at Mannheim, talking with the executioner, gazing upon the fatal sword, and collecting material about the excited students who dipped their handkerchiefs in Sand's blood after the mad idealist's head had been dissevered. What Gérard de Nerval thought of this gory subject is a mystery. Most of the time his mind was probably far away *dans la*

*grotte où nage la sirène.* So discussing possible themes, exhausting them, and creating others the two curious friends, one all earth and gusto and the other all air and witch-fire, passed through Heidelberg, Carlsruhe and Baden-Baden. With them went the fair Ida. In the terrain of the Grand Duke Leopold, Dumas received unexpected and irritating news. Porcher, doubtless aware that his loan would never be repaid, had sold the script of *Paul Jones,* the drama Dumas had hastily concocted from *Le Capitaine Paul,* to an obscure theater called the Panthéon and there on October twelfth the play had been produced and had failed. Dumas was enraged. The Théâtre du Panthéon, indeed! An old church turned into a hall of entertainment where they offered such fare as Dennery and Granger's *Les Petits Souliers, ou la Prison de Saint-Crépin* and Paul de Kock's *Le Pompier et l'Écaillère!* It was plain enough how this had happened. Théodore Nezel, the director of this obscure theater, was the nephew of Porcher. There was nothing to be done except to rush back to Paris before the last tags of his prestige had been torn from him by over-zealous creditors, friends and enemies; so Dumas interrupted his leisurely peregrination of the Duchy of Baden, postponed his playwriting projects with Gérard de Nerval, saw to it that Ida's bags and trunks were packed, and turned his anxious face toward the city that delighted and depressed him. It was autumn when he reached the boulevards again and this time he settled in the rue de Rivoli, at twenty-two. He cast up his debts and found them appalling. How could they swell as such a rate? There was something miraculous about it. Blithely, however, he settled down to work. The ravens of his own ingenuity must be made to provide for him, and, as they were industrious birds, he had no particular fear for the future.

The intensity with which Dumas labored when it became a struggle for bread and cheese (or rather, in his case, rich sauces and fancy ices) continued unabated through the winter of 1838 and far into the spring of 1839. Anything that turned up became grist for his industrious mill. Creative inspirations, newspaper squibs, plays, translations and novels issued pell-mell from the quarters in the rue de Rivoli where the unwearying pen squeaked ceaselessly. Ida yawned and wandered helplessly about the rooms but the bushy head of Dumas did not rise from the desk until the determined stint had been

accomplished. Such sustained assiduity was not without its reward and the exceedingly flat wallet of Dumas began to swell perceptibly.

Destiny sometimes manifests itself in strange ways. Two occurrences, slight in themselves, became straws of fate showing which way the winds of fortune were blowing for the author. In *Acte* he wrote his first historical romance, for *Isabel de Bavière* had been only a compilation. And Gérard de Nerval had brought to him a play by a young man named Auguste Maquet. Maquet was a scholarly youth, born on December 13, 1813, in Paris. He had studied at the Collège de Charlemagne, taught there for a brief period and then, failing to achieve a professor's appointment about 1835, had turned to literature. In 1830 he had been one of the young men who had roared the loudest at the première of Victor Hugo's *Hernani.* At that time he was known as MacKeat and for some time after he had published verses under that anglicised name. Gérard de Nerval had found a kindred spirit in him and the two men had become close friends and collaborators. During 1837 Maquet had composed a drama called *Un Soir de Carnaval* which Gérard had read and decided because of its flaws to take to Dumas, who, after all, was a supreme technician. Dumas arranged *Un Soir de Carnaval* into actable form, renamed it *Bathilde,* placed it for production at the Théâtre de la Renaissance (Salle Ventadour) with the proviso that Ida Ferrier enact the principal rôle, and generously suppressed his own name as a collaborator. *Bathilde* had its première on January 14, 1839, and scored a fair success, to the great delight of Maquet who saw his name on placards for the first time. Intoxicated with dreams of future glory he betook his tall figure and *mousquetaire* moustaches to the Bibliothèque and started to extract material from that rich source for a romance on the conspiracy of Cellamare. The extraordinarily picturesque qualities of French history appealed to him, too.

April brought no less than three premières at three different theaters. Not one of the plays had been composed by Dumas alone, but in each case he had been the dominating factor. On the second of the month *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle,* written from an idea submitted him by Brunswick, was produced at the Théâtre-Français with no less a star than Mademoiselle Mars (she was sixty years old);

on the tenth *L'Alchimiste,* a drama written in collaboration with Gérard de Nerval and plainly inspired by Milman's *Fazio,* was presented at the Théâtre de la Renaissance with Ida Ferrier sharing the honors with Frédéric Lemaître; and on the sixteenth *Leo Burckart,* a second collaboration with Gérard de Nerval, was ushered into life at the Porte-Saint-Martin theater. It was a full month but its paramount importance was due to *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle.* This play, a *volte-face* in relation to his previous dramatic endeavors, established Dumas as a distinguished author of comedy, and it still holds its place in the repertoire of the Théâtre-Français. Dumas had recited it—there had not been time to write it out—to the committee of the national theater and they had accepted it unanimously. This sparkling comedy of intrigue in an artificial milieu of aristocratic sophistication is one of the landmarks of French drama. The double-motived plot is concerned with (1) the wager of the Duc de Richelieu that he will secure a compromising assignation with the first woman he meets, and (2) Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle's attempt with the aid of the Marquis de Prié to rescue her father and brother from the Bastille; and it moves with a surprising grace and agility, the romantic elements of which Dumas was so much a master being woven into a complicated pattern which scintillates with witty dialogue and unexpected situations. The shade of Beaumarchais must have smiled at this drama.

The success of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* changed the complexion of things for Dumas. The Théâtre-Français granted the author a *prime* of five thousand francs beyond his royalties. Queen Christine of Spain, to whom for some unexplained reason Dumas had sent the original manuscript of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle,* responded with the cordon of a Commander of the Order of Isabella the Catholic. As usual with him, he began to lessen his labors and strut forth once more along the boulevards where he was eyed admiringly by the younger men and lighter women. He patronized the best cafés; he made his appearance at *bals* with Ida Ferrier (and sometimes other women) clinging to his arm. He bought bric-a-brac and jewels, and loaned money to his penniless friends with majestic recklessness. His vanity suggested still greater triumphs and he began to cast an envious eye toward the Academy. To Buloz he wrote: "Mention me, then,

in the Revue for the Academy and ask yourself how it is that I am not there when A . . . (Ancelot?) is a candidate." He announced to his friends that he had written *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* with a packet of pens that had been sent to him by the Duc d'Orléans when that prince royal had married. Friends laughed and friends admired. Friends also began to murmur about the plump Ida, her extravagances, her mannerisms and her shameless bids for publicity. Dumas did not hear or ignored these remarks and continued to parade her about Paris while the dandified Roger de Beauvoir, an old acquaintance and friend of the playwright, curled his moustache contemplatively and observed Ida's callipygous grace sway by.

Dumas conducted his inamorata to one *bal* too many, however. One evening he presented himself at an affair given by the Duc d'Orléans and, either ignorant of or dismissing any question of etiquette, ventured to present her to his patron. The Duc d'Orléans was an amiable young man who had been amused often enough by the divagations of Dumas but this was too much. It was also too public. "It is quite understood," he remarked rather icily to the astonished playwright, "that you could present to me only your wife." Dumas, who had understood nothing of the sort, returned to the rue de Rivoli in a contemplative mood. The duc's intimation was tantamount to a command, which, if disobeyed, would certainly mean the loss of a valuable friend and the cessation of important patronage. Dumas gazed attentively at Ida, who, divested of her elaborate ball-gown, was moving like some full-breasted swan about the room. Well, why not? He had lived with her for seven years. On the whole, he had adjusted himself to her admirably. It was true that she displayed jealousy occasionally and that she was rather selfish in her demands; but then, all women were like that. Jealousy was the ultimate compliment from a woman to a man and selfishness was a congenital feminine trait. Besides, she was better-looking than most women. Her rotundity might be a trifle pronounced but there was something attractively Oriental about it; she was not like the meager desmoiselles of Paris who gloried in an exceeding slimness that was positively unhealthy. No wonder Theophile Gautier rose to lyric raptures when he enumerated her charms. No wonder Roger de Beauvoir curled

his moustaches a trifle agitatedly when she entered the room. Then there was the old Duchesse d'Abrantès, now dead, who had approved of Ida and suggested time and again that he should marry, have legitimate children, and establish a settled household. That was an argument for the marriage for the Duchesse had possessed many lovers and knew whereof she spoke. The time came when the blood flowed slower and the twilight of *pantoufles* darkened the ultimate horizon. Dumas began seriously to consider this problem of marriage as the summer merged into the autumn and the autumn faded into the whiteness of winter. At the Gaîté they produced *Les Chevaux du Carrousel, ou le Dernier jour de Venise,* a play introducing Napoleon, by Paul Foucher, Victor Hugo's brother-in-law, and Alboize; but this did not divert Dumas from his matrimonial meditations. Virginie Déjazet pleased Paris at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal as Richelieu in *Les Premières armes de Richelieu* toward the beginning of December; still Dumas considered Ida and the possibilities of a legalized ménage with her. He thought about it as he hastily flung together the pages that made up his contributions to *Les Crimes Célèbres.* The Duc d'Orléans had put him in a fine position, indeed. Alexandre *fils,* now fifteen years old, made a noisy appearance in the rue de Rivoli but if Dumas entertained any thoughts about Marie-Catherine Lebay he kept them to himself. He still hesitated to make this extraordinary gesture of marriage. Could he, by any manner of ratiocination, convince himself that he was adapted to the rôle of a husband? Then, quite unexpectedly, a convincing argument crushed all his doubts. Ida's guardian bought up his old debts and threatened to use them as a weapon to protect the honorable future of Mademoiselle Ferrier. That settled it; he *would* get married, then. He would get married in the Chapel of the Chamber of Peers and he would have famous men surrounding him as he ceased to be a free man.

The ceremony took place on February 5, 1840, in the Chapel of the Chamber of Peers, as Dumas had planned. Ida Ferrier appeared elaborately gowned and coiffed, and Dumas, a trifle plumper than the Dumas who had ventured upon Paris seventeen years before, strode importantly to the altar accompanied by his famous witnesses. They were Chateaubriand, old and slyly smiling; Villemain, somewhat puzzled and out of place; Charles Nodier, a trifle ironical in

his bearing; and Roger de Beauvoir, faultlessly clad and perfumed. Several young comtes dressed the background. The sacred words were spoken and Chateaubriand advanced slowly to bless the presumably blushing bride. As he lifted his thin hands he noticed that she had *des choses considérables à mettre dans son corset.* The old author of the *Génie du Christianisme* thought of the fallen kings he had blessed and turning to Roger de Beauvoir muttered: "You see, my destiny does not change. Even at this moment all that I bless falls." Roger de Beauvoir curled his moustache and smiled.

There was a short interim between the marriage of Dumas and his hegira to Florence. One day he met Prosper Mérimée on the boulevard and the meticulous disciple of Stendhal and author of the chronicle of the reign of Charles IX asked Dumas why he was not busy on another comedy of the *genre* of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* for the Théâtre-Français. "Because I have not been asked," replied the new benedict proudly. Mérimée walked away smiling, for he, like most of the more serious writers in Paris, enjoyed the expansive boyishness and naïve vanities of Dumas. A few days later Dumas received a formal order for a new comedy from M. de Rémusat, the French Minister for the Interior. The wit of the new husband continued to delight Paris and furnish numerous squibs for the journalists. One evening he appeared at M. d'Argout's home for dinner festooned with several decorations, among them the ribbon of a certain order of which he had recently been created commander. M. Chaix d'Est-Ange, the lawyer, who was present, remarked enviously: "My dear Dumas, that ribbon is of a villainous color. One would think that it was your woolen vest peeping out." "Not at all," replied the playwright. "It is the same green as that of the grapes in the fable." Another time, Adolphe Dumas, a minorr dramatist whose *Camp des Croises* had been produced at the Théâtre-Français, met the author of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* in the *foyer* and ran up to him ejaculating: "It will soon be said 'the two Dumas' as they now say 'the two Corneille.'" "Good-evening, Thomas," responded Dumas. Thomas was the decidedly lesser-known brother of the great Pierre Corneille. It was during this short period of de Bergerac-like swaggering that Villemessant, the founder of *Figaro,* first described the appearance

CHATEAUBRIAND

*The old father of Romanticism was a witness at the wedding of Dumas*

ÉTIENNE MELINGUE
*As the Angel of Evil in* Don Juan de Marana

of Dumas. A concert was arranged at Herz's Hall for the benefit of *Sylphide,* the journal conducted by Villemessant at that time, and it was rumored that Alexandre Dumas was to make an appearance. Scores of expectant eyes were turned toward the door instead of the platform where the industrious musicians scraped away and a murmur of pleasure interrupted the melody when the quadroon dramatist entered the hall. The audience stood up to view him better and Dumas passed slowly down the aisle as though he had been a king at his own *levée,* shaking hands indiscriminately, nodding majestically, and greeting people he had never seen before. Villemessant described him as tall and the finished type of cavalier, the negroid heaviness of his features lightened by sparkling blue eyes, his solid shoulders and sturdy stature suggesting one of the Russian Life Guards. "He displayed in his person the perfection of many races," noted the journalist, "the impetuosity of the blood of Africa had been toned down by the elegance of European culture." It is instructive to bear this friendly portrait in mind in view of what the malevolent Jacquot was to write five years later.

About this time Auguste Maquet reappeared from his long immersion in dusty historical tomes. Dumas met him one day on the boulevards and accosted him heartily, asking the timid and scholarly minded fellow if he had any little thing up his sleeve that might be worked into a play or a book. "I want to make a rôle for Bouffé at the Gymnase." Maquet admitted that he possessed a manuscript, the result of his delving into the historical complexities of the conspiracy of Cellamare, which he called *Bonhomme Buvat.* He would gladly surrender it to Dumas for he had striven in vain to place it in various publications. If Dumas would . . . The young man (he was but twenty-seven) stood on one foot and then on the other. Of course Dumas would . . . He requested Maquet to send the manuscript to his house. To know Auguste Maquet at this time predicates the understanding that he was primarily a journeyman scribbler, that he was an exceedingly shy youth with a wholesome respect for the dominance of Dumas's personality and ability, and, that while he was ambitious, he was wisely so. He was content at this period to remain a secondary figure, to achieve an adequate subsistence by the modest path of journalism and hack-writing. He had been willing to collabo-

rate with Gérard de Nerval and see his own name suppressed. He was equally willing to collaborate with Dumas on the same conditions. There is a neat little problem here that appears to be not so much the result of an inferiority complex as an intelligent understanding that his prime function, at least for the present, was that of assistant, that he knew his limitations and understood that he was primarily a research-worker and not a creator. There is no reason to believe that he did not welcome the long noviciate of collaboration with Dumas that started so auspiciously in 1840. He could afford to wait and profit by the literary comradeship of the stronger nature. After that noviciate he had imbibed so much of the technique and gusto of the older man that he could stand on his own legs—but rather tremblingly—and a slowly awakened self-pride and vanity did the rest. But this Auguste Maquet of the later years had been *created* by Alexandre Dumas. In the early 1840s such an independence was very far from him although he did publish two books of his own. His measure may be taken from *Le Beau d'Augennes* (1843) and *Les Deux Trahisons* (1844). Even in these works he probably had the benefit of consultations with Dumas. Excepting these two independent ventures the literary life of Maquet from 1840 to the publication of *La Belle Gabrielle* in 1853 was one of partnership with stronger natures, with Dumas in the sixteen romances, with Arnould and Alboize in the *Histoire de la Bastille* (1844), with Alboize in *Les Prisons de l'Europe* (1844–46), and with Jules Lacroix in the play called *Valéria* (1851).

Florence continued to call Dumas in the most tantalizing manner and by June he had written to a friend explaining that his future address would be that Italian city. A few weeks later he was settled with Ida in the via Arondinelli, his habitation being rented to him by an English acquaintance named Cooper who was attached to the British Embassy. It was delightful in Florence. The sun shone steadily; Ida had not yet taken her wedded state too much for granted; the macaronis were drowned in the most delectable sauces; a few friends raised the supper parties to amusing symposiums; the days were long and beautifully adapted to writing. After his period of swaggering through the boulevards of Paris, Dumas recognized the

necessity of intensive and swift writing and settled himself to it with that sustained application that he could command always when need was his driver. First of all, there was the play to be written for the Théâtre-Français and he started at once on *Un Mariage sous Louis XV,* another comedy on the order of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle.* It is possible that he received suggestions for this drama from his old friend, Adolphe de Leuven, who now held a modest place among the minor dramatists of Paris, and Lherie (Brunswick), who had brought him the beginning of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle.* Then there was a mass of manuscript that Grisier, his old fencing master, had turned over to him. It was a jumbled account of Grisier's recent tour of Russia and imbedded in it was a charming love-story which Dumas, with his eye for effect, extracted, played up, and made the most engrossing part of *Le Maître d'Armes.* By far the most important literary production of this busy period, however, was the rewriting and extension of Auguste Maquet's modestly surrendered *Bonhomme Buvat,* which flowered beneath the pen of Dumas into four absorbing volumes and appeared eventually in *Le Siècle* under the familiar title of *Le Chevalier d'Harmental.* This romance is exceptionally important as a land-mark in the career of Dumas for in it for the first time and completely may be found all those qualities that bulwark the fame of the novelist today. It was the open door into those vast fields of French historical romance wherein Dumas was to browse so delightedly for the next ten years. Maquet possessed the key,—his research ability and eye for material; with that key the portal to the great future of Dumas was swung open.

All this activity (and no adjective fits it except furious) reveals one important fact,—the evident shift of Dumas' interest from the stage to the printed book. He who had been a playwright up to his thirty-sixth year, who had passed the formative years of his life in concocting dramas of all sorts, comedies, tragedies, verse-plays, vaudevilles, comic operas, and melodramas, was now reaching out toward a more ambitious field of endeavor. The Time-Spirit was urging him to it. The great plains of fiction, plains dotted with the historical débris of the past, stretched before him fair and inviting and he rushed into them like a gusty bandit taking what he desired, calmly "lifting" material if it suited his purpose, polishing, cutting, making "readable." He

was a *vulgarisateur*—he said it himself years later—and he gloried in this function that was to make him the delight of countless millions of common people all over the world. Though he might regret that he was not a *penseur* like Victor Hugo or a *rêveur* like Lamartine he still possessed an indisputable genius,—the astounding ability to create live figures that continued to live in the minds of his readers through the most vivid and unforgettable adventures. He possessed a quality that Mr. George Saintsbury called *Dumasity*. He was unconstrainedly natural and primitively emotional and blessed with a constantly agreeable wit and the delectable insouciance of the born raconteur. Already these traits revealed themselves in his prose, in the excellently conceived historical novel, *Acte,* in the sparkling pages of *Le Capitaine Pamphile,* above all, in the first maturity of *Le Chevalier d'Harmental*. Captain Roquefinette was the first of a long line of swashbuckling heroes. The master *feuilletoniste* was budding rapidly and the period of bourgeoning was but two or three years away. Back in Paris Auguste Maquet, ignoring the excitement over Hector Berlioz's concert at the Salle Vivienne and the production of George Sand's *Cosima* at the Théâtre-Français, was already at work on another historical romance to be called *Sylvandire,* which would give a glimpse of the court of Louis XIV in his later days, under the domination of Madame de Maintenon. He would turn the first rough draft of this work over to his great new friend. At the same time the canny editors of the more important periodicals began to take notice of the increasing interest displayed by the public in serialized stories.

Spurred toward the capital by sentimental loyalties and the usual impending squabble with the Théâtre-Français, Dumas appeared in Paris in season to pay his New Year's *devoirs* to the Duc d'Orléans. The writer had apparently forgiven the prince for forcing him into marriage. The prince received him graciously and even sent for his young son, the tiny Comte de Paris, and presented the ebullient writer to the child. Dumas kissed the infinitesimal fingers of the illustrious heir, who, for his part, found the novelist more amusing than a dancing bear. Either in emulation of the fair Ida or because of the rich polentas and succulent macaronis of Florence, Dumas was rapidly

losing his tall athletic figure and achieving a suspicious rotundity. "Make a wish for my son," suggested the duc and Dumas solemnly volunteered, "May it be a long time before he becomes a king." "You are right," returned the duc. "It is a villainous calling." "It is not because of that that I have made this wish," explained Dumas. "It is because he cannot become king until after the death of Your Highness." "Oh, I can die now," answered the duc sombrely. "With the mother that he possesses he will be raised as though I were here." Then, extending his hand towards the quarters of the Duchesse d'Orléans, he said, "It is a *quine* (five winning numbers) that I gained in the lottery." There were a few more words, principally about a history of the famous French regiments that the duc had commissioned Dumas to write, and the author took his departure convinced that the meditative Duc d'Orléans was more Hamlet-like than ever.

During this same January of 1841 Dumas made another attempt for a *fauteuil* in the Academy. Victor Hugo had been elected on the seventh of the month to the chair left vacant by the death of the ancient enemy of Romanticism, Népomucène Lemercier, and this had quickened the ambitions of Dumas. He had once prophesied that Hugo would succeed Lemercier in the Academy. To Charles Nodier he wrote, "Do you think at this time I would have any chance for the Academy? Hugo has succeeded. All his friends are mine, also. Think of this at your next meeting and sound out Casimir Delavigne, who takes some interest in me . . ." Nodier lifted his quizzical eyes, smiled at the wall, and, presumably, did what he could. There was a decided prejudice against the admission of Dumas to the Academy, a prejudice based, apparently, on two things,—the fact that Dumas, for the most part, lived his private life in public and the fact that his plays, dealing so often with frank and melodramatic subjects, revolted the conservative and dominating faction of the Forty Immortals. Dumas might have understood the difficulties before him if he had not been blinded by his vanity. As it was, he went ahead regardless of the laughter and ridicule he aroused among the more "literary" celebrities. What if Balzac *had* called him "that negro"; he had scored off the author of the Comedie Humaine many times; and Balzac, like himself, was an outsider from the Academy. In the meantime Dumas consoled himself by out-tricking his antagonists. The Théâtre-

Français, for instance, had scornfully rejected his *Un Mariage sous Louis XV* and just as the dramatist's enemies were chuckling with triumphant joy he produced the letter from M. de Rémusat ordering the play. The laughter stopped abruptly and the play was accepted. After all, what did a *fauteuil* in the Academy matter beside these practical triumphs? The Academy was the graveyard of mummified genius. All the same . . . Dumas suppressed his lacerated vanity and strove to think of other things.

His laughter echoed through the salons and cafés of Paris intermittently, for Dumas came and went with surprising irregularity. At Madame de Girardin's home he would arrive breathlessly and explain that he had merely dropped in for conversation. "From where?" "Why, Florence, to be sure." With an excellent chat in prospect it was not too much exertion for him to make the long uncomfortable journey. Sociability was a necessity and he deplored the gradual cessation of after-theater supper-parties and their animated conversation. There was so much to talk about. The Théâtre-Français, for instance. This year had marked the retirements of Mademoiselle Mars, Joanny, and Saint-Aulaire. Mars had taken it so nobly. Dry-eyed she had sat in her box and remarked to the zealous admirers who were sorrowing over her loss, *"Ceci, mes infants, peut bien passer pour un enterrement de première classe."* A young actress named Augustine Brohan had just made her début in soubrette rôles. Rachel was detested by the other players at the Théâtre-Français and a rival named Mlle. Maxime had been opposed to her. *L'Invincible,* however, still held her own. The Théâtre du Renaissance, which had opened its doors with Victor Hugo's *Ruy Blas,* closed them forever on May twenty-third. Those amusing dwarfs, Caroline and Carlo Laponne, were to be seen at the Théâtre-Saqui. A gentleman named Léon Pillet had retired from the directorship of the Opéra, abandoning his powers to Duponchel who shared them with Nestor Roqueplan. Pillet had been the young man in the astonishing uniform whom Dumas had seen when he hurried from the presence of the Marquis de Lafayette in 1830 to prepare for his tour of La Vendée. Balzac still thought he could write plays. What . . . after *Vautrin*? Subjects were endless. Dumas deplored, too, the rapidly-spreading custom of smoking, complaining that it

tainted the air, dulled the palate for fine sauces and subtly-flavored foods, and produced a phlegmatic mood in men. His own mouth appears to have never been closed long enough to support a pipe. His love of fantastic costumes persisted, and, though he was swelling to astonishing proportions (the lithe and melancholy gallant who wrote *Henri III et sa Cour* and who coughed gently into a fine cambric handkerchief was but a dream of the past), he continued to play the *incroyable* of his day. Women complicated his already complicated life and any thoughts of fidelity to the fair Ida that he may have conceived in the Chapel of the Chamber of Peers were dispersed upon the sparkling air of Paris. It was natural that he should become fair game for the newspapers. Alphonse Karr in *Les Guêpes* and half a dozen other editors found a rich mine from which to extract nuggets to adorn their sheets in the bubbling wit, childish vanity and inconsistent gestures of Dumas.

On June 1, 1841, *Un Mariage sous Louis XV* was produced at the Théâtre-Français with a capable cast including Mademoiselle Plessy, Menjaud, and Dumas's old friend, Firmin. It scored an instantaneous success and within a year had been presented forty-nine times, an excellent record for a repertory house. The plot was thin (it is concerned with the *mariage de convenance* between the Comte de Candale and Mademoiselle de Torigny and the amusing steps by which they progress from mutual aversion through indifference and jealousy to affection) but its motivation was sufficient to afford Dumas the opportunity to create scene after scene of smart dialogue. Oscar Wilde could not have done better. In this play (as in *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* before it and *Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr* which was to follow it) Dumas revealed his complete command of glittering dialogue, an ability that was to add so much to the lasting charm of the historical romances. He had achieved his formula if so dancing a prose quality may be called a formula and he was quite ready to venture upon those numerous scenes of court-life and intrigue under the debonair kings of France. It is quite true that viewed from the narrow attitude of the French purist, the Academically-minded critic immersed in the classical tradition of Gallic letters, he possessed no style. And yet his quality is intensely recognizable. It is simple enough to identify the touch of Dumas in his typical work even

though that work be shared with one or more collaborators. He dominated his material with an unmistakable gusto.

With *Un Mariage sous Louis XV* safely launched to the plaudits of the Parisian public it would seem as though it were time for Dumas to rest, to retire for a season and admire his own laurels; but he was incapable of rest. Standing still would be sure to tire him out. There were flying trips to be made between Florence and Paris, a jovial greeting to Ida in Italy and a boisterous conversation with Théophile Gautier in France. There were books, always books, to turn over to importunate publishers. He seemed to shake them from his massive form. It was during this arduous year that Alexandre *fils,* now seventeen years old, went to live with his father. Dumas *père,* flinging himself upon project after project that he might pour more gold into that coffer of his (which appears to have been without any bottom), paused long enough to embrace the lad, lead him to a few salons and show him off, and induct him into the extravagances of his own amoral life. Alexandre *fils,* who had left the Collège Chaptal without securing his baccalaureate, viewed his undisciplined father with dismay and affection and instinctively felt that he, the son, was the elder of the two. Dumas laughed and continued on his hurried way. There was barely time to confound Balzac at a soirée; just a minute to secure Alfred de Musset's *Spectacle dans un fauteuil* from which he planned to make a play; only a second in which to spend the last of his francs on new gowns for Ida; then, off to Florence again where the sun was warm and the ravioli was delectable.

## III

Before returning to the Italian city in 1842, Dumas, mindful that he was now in his fortieth year, made another attempt to storm the impregnable bastions of the French Academy. To his old friend, Baron Taylor, he wrote: "Don't forget about the Academy: stir up Nodier, Barante, and Molé: they are, I imagine, the three persons you can influence most. If my presence is desirable, one word from you will bring me back." As usual, nothing came of this plea and the rather disgruntled author, as he arrived in Florence, muttered to Ida: "I asked to be the fortieth but it appears they desire to make

me do quarantine. (*Je demande à être le quarantième, mais il parait qu'on veut me faire faire quarantaine.*)" The play on words probably cheered him up. He immersed himself in the social life of the French colony in Florence and forgot the callous indifferences of Paris. To call upon one's friends and gossip animatedly, to dine well at tables where the service was a liturgy, to write assiduously beside an open window from whence one could see the kaleidoscopic life of the streets and the lazy Italians dawdling in the shadows, to travel, these were the joys that mattered. Among the more important houses open to Dumas was that of Prince Jérôme Bonaparte, the Villa Quarto near Florence, and to this hospitable mansion Dumas repaired soon after his arrival in Italy in 1842. Prince Jérôme was worried. His son, the young Napoleon—later to be the well-known "Plon-Plon" of the Second Empire—had quitted the service of Wurtembourg and was returning to Florence. There were political reasons for his retirement. France was slyly threatened by an imminent coalition of powers because of the Egyptian situation and Prince Jérôme did not want his son exposed to possible service against Louis-Philippe. "When he comes," remarked the prince to Dumas, "I will turn him over to you." Dumas was dubious. What could he do with a prince? It might be very like having a white elephant on one's hands. "What good can I do him?" he asked in a faintly-surprised voice. "Teach him about France, which he doesn't know," suggested Prince Jérôme, "and take him for some trips through Italy if you have the time." Dumas was seized by an inspiration. "Has he seen Elba?" he inquired. Prince Jérôme shook his head. "Very well," concluded Dumas. "I will take him to the island of Elba, if that is agreeable to you. It is fitting that the nephew of the Emperor should terminate his studies by an historical pilgrimage." Some time later when the young Napoléon arrived in Florence this proposed excursion was put into execution. Dumas and his royal charge, each of them with a thousand francs generously supplied by Prince Jérôme in his pocket, set sail from Livorno for Porto-Ferrajo in a small barque called, curiously enough, *Le Duc de Reichstadt.* A storm came up and the small vessel was tossed furiously on the waves of the Mediterranean, much to the discomfort of Dumas who began to worry about possible fatalities. Suppose the young prince were drowned? The young prince

did not worry at all because he was too occupied: he was dreadfully sea-sick. Elba was reached safely, however, and Dumas hustled his royal charge ashore with a sigh of relief. The tour of the island was accomplished in excellent style. The prince saw where his unfortunate uncle lived from May, 1814, to February, 1815. He admired the treeless mountain ranges and the peak of Monte Capanne. He talked to the natives of Porto Ferrajo, Orte Rio, and Porto Longone. Then, the historical pilgrimage completed, Dumas decided that he would enjoy some hunting. A day was passed on the neighboring island of Pianosa in shooting at rabbits, silly little animals that did not possess enough sense to hide themselves. It was while Dumas and Prince Napoleon were engaged in this agreeable occupation that the older man, always observant, noticed a sugar-loaf-shaped rock that thrust out of the blue sea at some distance from the shore. The guide followed his glance and remarked: "Excellency, if you went over there you would find splendid hunting." "What is there?" inquired Dumas. "The island is overrun with wild goats," explained the guide. "Otherwise it is deserted." "And the name of the island?" "They call it the Isle-de-Monte-Cristo." The name struck the fancy of Dumas and he gazed inquiringly at the young prince who had just knocked over another rabbit. "Tomorrow we shall go there and shoot goats," promised the youthful Bonaparte. Monte Cristo. Monte Cristo. There was something tantalizing and suggestive about the name. It did not sound like the other little islands around Elba,—Pianosa, Capraja, Palmaola. The next day Dumas and his royal protegé were rowed out to the mysterious island where, it was reported, there were the ruins of a once-famous monastry called San Mamiliani, but before they disembarked one of the brownskinned Tuscan oarsmen warned them that the island was deserted, that it was *en contumace,* and that anyone landing there would be liable to quarantine for five or six days upon arriving at any port. *Quarantaine. Quarantième.* Dumas had almost forgotten those confounded words. He explained to the prince that he possessed a horror of quarantine, and that, to speak truly, he had no passion for wild goats. It was decided merely to row around the island and establish its geographical position and general shape and then return to the stupid rabbits on Pianosa. The circuit of the gloomy rock was made and Dumas viewed with

curiosity the savage scenery, the clefts in gigantic stone, the strange silence unbroken save for the distant bleat of a startled goat. There might very well be a deep and securely hidden cave among those rocks secure from the prying eyes of men and the feet of ignorant travellers. Monte-Cristo was *en contumace*. A cave filled with jewels. Was there a ruined monastery there? A secret-eyed abbé kneeling over the jewels. The cavern of Ali-Baba. Faint memories of his boyhood reading in the Arabian Nights crept through the mind of Dumas as the Tuscan oarsmen turned the boat toward Porto Ferrajo and the sharp slap of their oars spurted jewel-chains of water into the sunny air. Monte Cristo. Monte Cristo. What an excellent name it would make for a romance.

One evening some months after the trip to Elba, Prince Jérôme presented a very pained and shocked face to his guest as Dumas mounted the steps of the Villa Quarto. This was unusual for the Prince was jolly enough in spite of his lost kingdom and "Plon-Plon," his son, was a youth of spirit and humor. Dumas was instantly beset by the most painful forebodings. "What is it?" he inquired rather feebly, for he detested sorrow. "We have received a report that the Duc d'Orléans has been killed in a carriage accident," replied Prince Jérôme, whose agitation was very plainly for Dumas and not for the ruling house of France. For an instant the heart of Dumas seemed to stop beating. The Duc d'Orléans dead? His patron? The prince upon whose knees he had wept the fatal day his mother died? Dumas, as super-buoyant and sentimental in grief as he was in joy, staggered toward Prince Jérôme crying: "Permit me to weep over a Bourbon in the arms of a Bonaparte." The dinner was a sad and tasteless affair and Dumas excused himself as soon as he could and hurried back to Florence. Prince Napoléon accompanied him and both of them repaired to the Cachines for verification of the news. It was true. Bad news is always true. The Duc d'Orléans had been flung violently from his carriage when he had risen in excitement to aid the *cocher* in restraining the run-away horses. His senseless body had been picked up in the Chemin de la Révolte near the Porte-Maillot and carried to a nearby house. Four hours later he died without recovering consciousness. The date was July thirteenth.

The grief of Dumas was excessive, and, viewed from the colder Anglo-Saxon attitude, a little theatrical. But it is difficult not to be convinced of the sincerity of this sorrow. One must take into consideration the explosive Gallic temperament and the romantic nature of Dumas before criticizing the obviousness of his anguish. He had been peculiarly charmed by the Duc d'Orléans and a profound affection for that serious-visaged young prince had developed as the months brought them in closer intimacy. This affection was tinged with an awareness of the comfortable joys of patronage, perhaps, but even this regard for self-interest does not seriously impugn its authenticity. Dumas expressed his grief by writing feverish letters of sympathy to all the Royal family, to the Duc d'Aumale, to the Queen Marie-Amelie, to the Duchesse d'Orléans, that *quine* that the dead duc had won in the lottery of life. He even composed a prayer for the little Comte de Paris. *"O mon père qui êtes aux cieux, faites-moi tel que vous étiez sur la terre, et je ne demande pas autre chose à Dieu pour ma gloire à moi, et pour le bonheur de la France."* To *Le Siècle* he contributed a memorial article and Villemessant, who read it while he was in his bath, declared that he wept so copiously that the tub almost overflowed. On July twenty-sixth Dumas learned from the *Journal des Débats* that the funeral ceremonies would be held in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Paris on August third and that the inhumation at Dreux would take place the next day. He determined to be present at these solemn functions. Starting on the twenty-seventh of July he boarded the little steamer for Genoa. On August first, by travelling day and night, he reached Lyons and at three o'clock on the morning of the third he was at Paris. He assisted in the ceremonies at Notre-Dame, heard the solemn music as it swelled through the high nave, saw the dignitaries of the kingdom in their black mourning bands, and gazed apathetically at the bright sun shining through the stained glass of the windows. The next day he travelled to Dreux with three college friends of the dead prince, the deputy Guilhem, Ferdinand Leroy, secretary-general of the prefecture of Bordeaux, and Bocher, the prince's librarian. At the royal tomb he stood with bare head and witnessed the sad solemnity of the inhumation. He recalled that it was exactly four years since he had seen the body of his mother laid away and this intensified his grief.

Some days later Doctor Pasquier, with whom he had once sat on the bright grass at Compiegne in the Duc d'Orléans' company, sent him the blood-stained *serviette* on which the duc's head had rested after the accident. It was one of the few things that Dumas retained all his life.

But he was not troubled for long. The road was fairly clear before him. He was fully aware of the trend of taste in popular letters. The long serials of Eugene Sue and Frédéric Soulié were enormous straws showing which way the huge wind was blowing. Auguste Maquet, who had turned over to him the first draft of *Sylvandire,* loomed distinctly in his projects for the immediate future. It was necessary for him to relinquish his residence in Florence, first of all, and remain in Paris where he could watch the development of events more closely. Goodbye, Italian sunlight and lazy days. Goodbye, Prince Jérôme and "Plon-Plon." It was no hardship to remain in Paris. The summer of 1842 was charming and the capital laughed and murmured agreeably under its bourgeois ruler, a trifle bored, perhaps, but not yet manifesting too noticeable an impatience. One could drive out to Au Rendezvous des Briards on the shaded road of Vincennes and dine luxuriously with such excellent fellows as Auguste Luchet, Émile de Girardin, Félix Pyat, the *chansonnier* Bréant and Maurice Alhoy. The lights beamed warmly and the sleepy birds could be heard chirping in the trees. An excellent *chef de cuisine,* once of Philippe's in the rue Montorgueil, had just purchased the establishment of Parisot in the rue Contrescarpe and was preparing delicious fare for wise *gourmets.* His name was Magny and soon it would be associated with a new group of literary figures who would congregate in one of his rooms and devour enormous dinners. The Bal des Acacias had recently opened and innumerable painters, among them Paul Delaroche, made it a point to frequent the lively resort and select from the habitues, mostly Jews, models for their salon pictures. In all the *quartiers* tiny shops were springing up where one could purchase *une tasse de bouillon* for twenty-five centimes. Music streamed forth pleasantly from the open doors of the cafés and the clop-clop of horses' hoofs sounded constantly on the cobbles of the boulevards. The colored multitude of people flowed back and forth

in the streets. Madame Planat, the modiste, was the fashionable trade's lady of the day and her artfully designed *bonnets à la du Barry* might be seen in all the foyers. The *courtisanes,* not yet as flamboyant as they would be during the reign of Napoléon III, mounted the steps of the Opéra; the *filles,* bright-eyed and bird-like, wandered along the boulevards; and in the quarter about Notre-Dame de Lorette the little *lorettes,* their full skirts billowed by the breeze and their bonnets tied neatly beneath their dimpled chins, hurried around corners and through alleys and up long flights of stairs to Bohemian studios. It was the era of Henri Murger. Dumas, who savored all aspects of Parisian life, saw everything, relished it, and expatiated for the hundredth time on the joys of the metropolis. It was easy to forget Florence and easier still to do without Ida. The bloom had vanished from his marriage and he would see her but seldom from now on. Toward the end of September the loyal citizens of Villers-Cotterets, hearing that their famous compatriot had returned to Paris and settled again in his old lodgings in the rue de Rivoli, offered Dumas a banquet. He appeared and revelled in the honors paid him and renewed his friendships with half-forgotten comrades.

On December second, *Halifax,* a play with an English setting, was produced at the Théâtre des Variétés. Dumas had written it in collaboration with D'Ennery and while it was typical of his new manner it was not distinctive. He was getting his feet planted solidly on the ground now, recovering from the shock of the Duc d'Orléans' death, and cleverly making himself absolutely necessary to the popular journals. The year 1843 witnessed him in the full swing of his activities, entirely aware of what he was about, and moving steadily with the current of public favor. Of course, he could not refrain from making his usual *faux pas.* Dumas would never have been Dumas if he had not committed these egregious errors of judgment. Casimir Delavigne died and left two vacancies behind him, his *fauteuil* in the Academy and the post of librarian in the Bibliothèque de Fontainebleau. Dumas, walking in the funeral cortège behind the body of the man with whom he had once worked in the Palais-Royal, actually forgot himself so far as to ask Montalivet, who was walking beside him, for the vacant *fauteuil.* He also desired the librarian's post for Alexandre *fils.* This was striking while the iron was alto-

gether too hot and Montalivet naturally refused to discuss the matter; but people talked and Dumas soon discovered that his tactlessness had aroused a small storm of censure against him in the press. He did not improve matters a whit by writing to *Le Siècle:* "As several papers have stated that I had sought and obtained the post of librarian at Fontainbleau, I shall be much obliged if you will contradict this news, which has no foundation. If I had desired either of the chairs left vacant by the illustrious author of *Les Messéniennes,* it would have been only his chair at the Academy." This loud hint fell upon obstinately deaf ears and Dumas came no nearer the coveted *fauteuil* in 1843 than he had in 1840. There was no hope for him there but it took him a dreadfully long time to accept the humiliating truth. One is a little sorry to see this dogged pertinacity so ill-rewarded (no matter how grave the tactlessness often involved in its expression) and yet it would be difficult to conceive Dumas as an Academician. He never seems to suggest one; there was always too much life in him. Other affairs proceeded much better. His version of *Sylvandire* was completed and being serialized; August Maquet was already ferreting out new material for future books; *Le Chevalier d'Harmental* was issued in four volumes and received joyously by a large audience; and the Théâtre-Français, that alternate enemy and friend, had accepted a new play entitled *Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr,* which Dumas had written with De Leuven and Brunswick.

One important event this year must have saddened Dumas although he was connected with it only by sympathy. That was the production of Victor Hugo's *Les Burgraves* on March seventh at the Théâtre-Français. It was the last feeble blow struck in defence of the Romantic Movement that Hugo had enunciated sixteen years before in his introduction to *Cromwell.* The movement was outdated although it still manifested itself in weakening ways. Vacquerie and Prosper Mérimée, still fighting against time, had gone to Célestin Nanteuil, one of the Romantic gods of 1830, and begged him to raise three hundred young men to be employed as a *claque* in imitation of the embattled cohorts of *Hernani.* Nanteuil shook his long hair sadly and answered with a profound melancholy: "Young men, go back to your master and say that there is no longer any youth. I cannot furnish three hundred young men." It was true. The days charged with the electricity of

excitement were over. Men no longer were young or if they were they congregated in the Café Momus, next door to the *Journal des Débats,* and discussed other matters than Romanticism. There, playing *tric-trac,* one might discover Henri Murger, Champfleury, Courbet, Bonvin, Chintreuil, Pierre Dupont and Jean Journet. It was another Bohemia with other ideals than those of the young men of 1830. The Parisian public preferred to go to the Théâtre-Italien and listen to Donizetti's *opéra-bouffe, Don Pasquale,* or the Cirque-Olympique where they could laugh at the antics of the clown Auriol rather than sit through high-minded Romantic dramas. So, in spite of excellent acting *Les Burgraves* fell flat. It was hissed from the beginning to the end. Dumas had escaped the current of defeat by changing his style and when *Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr* was produced at the Théâtre-Français on July twenty-fifth with Firmin and Mademoiselle Plessy in the leading rôles it scored a complete triumph and took its place as a regular addition to the repertoire. Like *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* and *Un Mariage sous Louis XV* it was bright and sparkling and eager audiences crowded to see it. But if the spectators liked it some of the critics did not. There was Jules Janin, for instance. In the *Journal des Débats* he scored the "verbose sterility" of Dumas and remarked: "You must be on your guard, for at the least distraction he makes a dupe of you. If you don't put your finger on the particular passage that has been stolen he makes a fool of you." The plot of *Les Demoiselles de Saint-Cyr* was ridiculed and Dumas was upbraided for his carelessness. The article was quite amusing to read but it did not amuse Dumas. He witnessed with amazement one of his old friends turning upon him and using the same malicious weapons that Granier de Cassagnac and a dozen other nonentities had employed,—half-truths, false perspectives, and personal bitternesses. Naturally he lost his own equilibrium and wrote an indignant letter to the *Journal des Débats.* There were bitter polemics between Dumas and Janin in the press and then the usual climax was reached—a duel. The principals, accompanied by their seconds, arrived on the field of honor. Dumas, as the aggrieved party, chose swords. He had not forgotten Frédéric Gaillardet. "I will never fight with the sword," declared Janin firmly. "I know a secret thrust that would lay you low in a second. Pistols!" Dumas shook his bushy head violently. "I

should be an assassin if I consented to pistols," he said. "I can kill a fly at forty paces." The two antagonists, overcome by each other's magnanimity, stared at one another for an instant and then flew into a warm embrace. In this way was honor satisfied between geniuses of France in the 1840's.

Two more plays and several books filled out the generous production of Dumas during this year. *Louise Bernard,* a drama written in collaboration with de Leuven and Brunswick, was produced at the Porte-Saint-Martin on November eighteenth and *Le Laird de Dumbicky* was given at the Odéon on December thirtieth with Virginie Bourbier, an old flame, in the rôle of Nelly Quinn, *"actrice de Drury Lane, maîtresse du Roi."* Neither drama amounted to anything. They were capable "theater" for their time and that is all that can be said about them, except, perhaps, that *Le Laird de Dumbicky* proved to be such a failure that it flung Dumas so out of sorts with the stage that he applied himself more assiduously than ever to the romances he was writing with Auguste Maquet. The books were more exciting. They, after all, were the spring-board from which he hoped to rise to that pleasing notoriety that was his greatest pleasure in life. There was *Georges,* a story of the Ile-de-France, written with Mallefille; *Ascanio,* an historical romance of the times of François Ier in which Benvenuto Cellini appeared and which was written in collaboration with young Paul Meurice; *Le Corricolo* and *La Villa Palmieri,* two volumes of *impressions de voyage; Filles, Lorettes, et Courtisanes,* a study of the frail femininity of Paris; and *Un Alchimiste au dix-neuvième siècle,* a biography of Henri de Ruolz, the musical composer and chemist. It was heterogenous work but through it beat a pulse that was unique and that predicted an immediate victory in public favor. Dumas was fairly on the upward road, ready to emancipate himself from the past, and adjust himself to the future. He knew what the era desired. It was time to begin. The arc of his career lifted toward the skies.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## THE KING OF ROMANCE

### I

Dumas, approaching the zenith of his career, found the time peculiarly ripe for him. It was the era of the efflorescence of the *feuilleton* and in this form of writing, this serialized narrative of adventure, intrigue and gustiness that appeared day by day in the journals, the romancer found himself admirably at home. Three important and necessary elements made possible the supreme success of Dumas. They were: the will of the public, the discovery of the romantic potentialities of French history by Dumas, and the appearance of Auguste Maquet at the right moment. It was a sublime combination for a volatile and undisciplined talent congenitally disposed toward popular effort: an audience, a subject, and a meticulous and painstaking aide to shoulder the laborious task of research. From 1840, roughly speaking, to the eve of the revolution of 1848 Paris led a calm and prosy existence in the home, the streets and cafés. It was pleasant enough to sit in the sun at small tables, sip absinthe, play dominoes and glance through the papers. There was something positively intellectual in perusing the snippet of diurnal *feuilleton*. It did not take long and it afforded a subject for conversation. It speedily grew into a widespread habit. Every journal offered its daily bit of *feuilleton* and the French public finally expected it as unthinkingly as the apéritif before dinner. Along the boulevards the newspapers flowered over a thousand tiny round tables, and the bored public, bored by inactivity, by Louis-Philippe, by M. Guizot, by the stale flavor of the bourgeois monarchy, experienced a vicarious adventure in musketeers and historic personalities from a larger time. Dumas was as prepared for his audience as it was for him. He, too, lived vicariously in the great deeds of heroes, and he was particularly adapted to pass

them on to less imaginative folk. Color, swift movement, the give and take of repartée, swords and conspiracies excited him as much as they did his readers. He could laugh unroariously over his Chicot as he created him and burst into tears at the death of Porthos. If he was not a scholar in the true sense of the word, that mattered little; Maquet was his scholar and Maquet became a part of his brain. He could nose out the historical material and fling down the glittering treasure trove before Dumas, and the romancer, with an unerring skill and intuitive prevision of universal appeal, could arrange these finds into the lasting patterns of the novels. Dumas had found his formula at the precise moment that the Time-Spirit provided him with an eager audience.

The three years from 1843 to 1846 were years of mounting glory. Dumas rose to a pre-eminence far above even the great days of *Antony*. His fortunes were at full tide and he labored like a giant to perpetuate them. There was no time to travel and but little time to play. In the modest lodgings at 22, rue de Rivoli, or at 109, rue de Richelieu, or at 45, rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, or in the Villa Médicis in the rue du Boulingrin at Saint-Germain—for he moved about much during this period—he would sit at his desk and apply himself intensively. Clothed in his *pantalons à pied* and shirt-sleeves, his arms bared to the shoulder and his collar unfastened, he started to work at seven o'clock in the morning and continued until seven at night when his son came to dine with him. Sometimes his lunch remained untouched on the little table by his side where the servant had placed it. He had forgotten to eat. In the evening, after he had dined with Alexandre *fils*, he would recount to his son all that his characters had done during the day and rejoice in the thought of what they were going to do on the morrow. "Ah, those happy days!" wrote the son in after years. "We were both of an age: you were forty-two, and I was twenty!"

There were constant interruptions but they did not halt the steady progress of the novels. The author would stretch a bare arm in greeting to the unexpected visitor and continue to write with the other hand. Guests in the antechambers could hear him roaring with laughter at the remarks of his own characters. The industrious Maquet was forever rushing in and out, bringing material dredged from the Bibliothèque or hurrying away for more. When Dumas was in Saint-

Germain a steady stream of notes and copy passed between the two men. *"Mon très cher,—De la copie le plus vite possible, quand ce ne serait, qu'une dizaine de pages et surtout le premier volume de d'Artagnan. A vous, Dumas."* *"Si vous avez un moment je serais bien aise de vous voir. N'oubliez pas de vous procurer le volume de l'histoire de Louis XIII qui traite du procès de Chalais et les pièces y relatives. Apportez-moi en même temps ce que vous avez de travail préparé pour Athos."* *"Mon cher ami,—C'est curieux. Je vous avais écrit ce matin pour que vous introduisiez le bourreau dans la scène, puis j'ai jeté la lettre au feu en pensant que je l'introduirais moi-même. Or, le premier mot que je lis me prouve que nous nous sommes rencontrés. A vous, et piochez, car je suis sans besogne depuis deux heures. Que j'en aie pour 11 heures du soir. A vous, A. D."* Maquet was the perfect aide. He ransacked the histories of France, filled in chapters, and once, when one of Dumas's packets of copy for a journal was lost, rewrote the entire section from his own memory. He was the second brain of Dumas, almost anticipating the demands of the stronger nature. He was assiduous, painstaking, tireless, a fit assistant for the restless and gargantuan application of the novelist. A hint from Dumas was enough. *"Mon cher ami,—Nous avons dans votre prochain chapitre, à apprendre par Aramis, qui a promis à d'Artagnan de s'en informer, dans quel convent est Madame Bonacieux, ce qu'elle fait dans ce convent et de quel protection la reine l'entoure."* Over night Maquet would scramble the chapter together, forward it to Dumas, and the next day the romancer would reshape it and hurry it on to the newspaper that was printing the serial. It was not a question of one romance, but of several at a time, sometimes five. Guests, debt-collectors and women might pass through the doors of the Villa Médicis or the Parisian apartments but the work never faltered. It proceeded miraculously and each day the eager public opened its newspapers to find the new instalments.

Quite suddenly the Paris of 1844 was gripped and held spellbound by *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and the fame of Dumas outsoared even that of the windy politicians of the day. What was M. Guizot beside d'Artagnan? What did the dull and aging Louis-Philippe matter now that the sly Cardinal Richelieu was manoeuvring against Anne of Austria? Dumas (and the unnamed Maquet) ruled Paris. *Les Trois*

THE QUADROON CHEF

*Dumas concocting his bouillabaisse of romance*

ETIENNE CARJAT'S IDEA OF DUMAS

*The novelist was always excellent game for caricaturists*

*Mousquetaires* was one of those amazing books that occur once or twice in a century. Its sources were few but sufficient. The hook-nosed and fierce-visaged youth on a wind-galled yellow pony, who cantered into French romantic fiction in 1844, rode straight out of Courtilz de Sandraz' *Mémoires de Monsieur d'Artagnan,* an apocryphal work published at The Hague in 1700. Maquet discovered the volumes and saw the possibilities of romance in them. In them were d'Artagnan and the three musketeers, Athos, Porthos and Aramis; Miladi and Rochefort (Rosnay in de Sandraz); the journey to Paris; the rivalry between the Cardinal's guards and the King's musketeers. Dumas fell upon this material with a bellow of joy. It was easy to piece out the story from other sources. *Les Mémoires* of Laporte furnished the abduction of Madame Bonacieux. Roederer's *Intrigues Politiques et Galantes de la Cour de France* gave the story of the diamond studs sent by Anne of Austria to Buckingham. Tallemant des Réaux and Madame de la Fayette were ransacked for other hints. From the fertile mind of Dumas himself came Grimaud, Mousqueton, Bazin and Planchet and the epochal journey to Calais. With so much excellent material at hand the problem became one of marshalling the incidents and capturing the swashbuckling flavor of a period. How much Maquet did is unknown, but it may be surmised that his duty was the securing of color, of historical incidents, of characters and the composition of first drafts of chapters. Dumas called incessantly for these rough drafts, which he would revise or rewrite introducing new episodes and the swift play of dialogue. The fact that these characters had once been actual figures in the life of France, that d'Artagnan was one Charles de Batz-Castelmore, the fifth son of Bertrand de Batz, seigneur de Castelmore, that Athos was a Béarnese gentleman named Armand de Sillègue d'Athos, that Porthos was an adventurer from Pau named Isaac de Portau, and that Aramis was in reality Henri d'Aramitz, a squire and lay abbot of Béarn, is interesting but unimportant. Dumas translated these personages into figures of his own fancy. He gave them a new life and a new flavor. One has only to compare the heroes of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* with their prototypes in Courtilz de Sandraz' book to realize the enduring strength and intuitive taste of the novelist.

Dumas was indefatigable. Maquet was prodded continually for copy and we may imagine him, fired by the example of the older man,

bustling about the libraries of Paris, nosing through historical tomes, scribbling as fast as he could, rushing from Paris to Saint-Germain and back, laboring day and night to feed this ambitious furnace of a Dumas. *Les Trois Mousquetaires* was not the only book being written; there were half a dozen other ventures as well. It was enormous, this industry of Dumas, and muttering voices began to hint that no one man could write so much in such a short space of time. Of course it was impossible unless Dumas's methods of authorship be taken into account. Pushed by newspaper editors, driven by contracts and urged by his all-embracing ambition, he created his peculiar manner of composition, of engaging assistants to do the rough work for him, to fetch and carry, to assemble material, to place before him the chaos from which he evolved his absorbing narratives. He was like Napoleon creating campaigns and ordering his maréchaux to carry out specific orders. He was like the great Italian painters who permitted their apprentices to paint in the backgrounds. There is not one of the great novels that is not completely dominated by Dumas, not one in which his mind and temperament are not imbedded; they belonged to him and he to them in spite of the assistants. It is only necessary to read the books written by these assistants alone to acknowledge this. Dumas was still Dumas without Maquet and Meurice and Fiorentino, but not one of those estimable men amounted to anything without Dumas. He was the force, the plunge, the brain, the style, the gustiness, the humor and the scheme.

Within a few months of the termination of *Les Trois Mousquetaires* Dumas again astonished Paris with *Le Comte de Monte Cristo.* This enormous work came from several sources. First of all, there were the name and recollection of the mysterious island about which he had traveled with the son of Prince Jérôme Bonaparte. He had promised to put it in a story some time. Then there was the suggestion of *Le Journal des Débats* that instead of writing the proposed *Impressions de voyage dans Paris* he produce a sensational romance that might repeat the vast success of Eugène Sue's *Mystères de Paris.* A short story, *Le Diamant et la Vengeance,* discovered in Peuchet's *La Police Devoilée,* gave him the central idea, that of a mysterious man returning to Paris to punish the villains who had maltreated him years before. The matter was discussed with Maquet and gradually the shape of

*Monte Cristo* was unfolded. It was planned to lay the opening chapters in Rome, and Dumas had already mapped out and partially written the adventures of Albert de Morcerf and Franz d'Epinay and was about to continue with Monte Cristo's arrival in Paris when Maquet stopped him with a sudden suggestion. The youth of Monte Cristo must be developed. Marseilles, Danglars, Edmond Dantès and Mercedes, the Abbé Faria and the Chateau d'If, these were the characters and scenes that should be related not as memories recalled by Monte Cristo in his later years, as Dumas had intended, but as the opening movement of the novel. Dumas considered the suggestion, agreed and recast the book in the three parts that the whole world knows: Marseilles, Rome and Paris. Once started *Monte Cristo* proceeded swiftly, for Dumas was entirely free in this work; he was bound by no historical characters or dates, his imagination had full swing; therefore it is the most personal and revealing of his works. It is certain that Dumas saw himself idealized and sublimated in the character of Edmond Dantès. Monte Cristo with his fine clothes, his jewels, his vanities, his love of travel, his romantic mysteriousness, his power, his liberality—"A million? Why, I generally carry that much about on me as pocket money!"—his egoism, was precisely the ideal of Dumas. The expansive gestures and the all-powerful will of the Comte were reflections of that self-dramatization that was so much a part of Dumas's nature.

*Monte Cristo* held Paris enthralled. Every day an eager public seized the *Journal des Débats* to discover what that fellow, Edmond Dantès, was doing. Dantès lived for them. He evolved out of a legend into a reality and he has maintained that reality ever since. Guides today show visitors the cell of Monte Cristo in the Chateau d'If. Dumas, bowed over his desk, heard the loud acclaim but he did not desist from his labors. He was building a huge monument now of which *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and *Monte Cristo* formed the cornerstone, and there were many other blocks of granite to be hoisted into place. When he walked abroad he was admired by eager crowds, and all manner and condition of people flocked to Saint-Germain. Louis-Philippe, observing the revival of Saint-Germain and the comparative dullness of Versailles where he resided asked the advice of Montalivet as to the best method of enlivening the royal suburb. Montalivet said: "Sire, Dumas has a fortnight's confinement to do for National Guard duty;

make him do it at Versailles." The indignant King turned his back on his minister and did not speak to him for a month. The idea that his quadroon ex-copy clerk with his *tête-montée* should outdo him as the center of attraction was both humiliating and disturbing. Dumas admitted his enlivening qualities. "I carry with me wherever I go—I don't know how it is, but it is so—an atmosphere of life and stir which has become proverbial. I have lived three years at Saint-Germain, and the people of that respectable Sleepy Hollow no longer knew themselves. I imparted to the place a go and liveliness which the inhabitants at first took for a sort of endemic and contagious fever. I bought the little theater; and the best actors and actresses from Paris, coming down to supper with me, used often to perform one of my plays for the benefit of the poor. The hotel keeper had no rooms left; the livery stable ran out of horses; the railway company confessed to me one day an increase in their receipts of twenty thousand francs a year since I had come to live at Saint-Germain."

The effect of the romances upon Paris was prodigious. Men met in the streets and discussed the adventures of d'Artagnan. Villemessant awakened his wife in the middle of the night to tell her that Edmond Dantès had escaped from the Chateau d'If. Balzac admitted to Madame Hanska that he had passed the entire day reading *Les Trois Mousquetaires*. Théophile Gautier has written about the excitement that maintained in the city as instalment after instalment of the romances appeared. It is not necessary to speculate about the reasons for this popularity. First of all, there were the novels. There had been nothing like them in France before, nothing so stirring, nothing so popular in intent, nothing so vivid and skillful and sustained in interest. They were calculated to appeal to an extremely wide audience, to the man in the street as well as the scholar in his study. Coterie authors might sniff at them as vulgar productions, might point out that the chapters were lacking in style, that there was no profundity, that the structures were sprawling, that history was perverted to serve the ends of romantic fiction, but no amount of cavil could erase the vivid impression these books left on the minds of readers in all stations of life. Then there was the time itself, a dull time wherein the inactivity of Paris could only be lightened by vicarious participation in fictional adven-

ture. People fled to these books from ennui. It was a natural reaction, the same sort of reaction that had culminated in the Romantic movement and the Revolution of 1830. It would, perhaps, be going too far to intimate that the romances of Dumas awakened the imagination and strengthened the purposes of the proletariat of 1848, but it is manifest that the Time-Spirit was carrying a people, unbearably bored, toward a vital explosion, and that the literature of the time is always an important aspect of the Time-Spirit. At any rate, during these years of the great romances Dumas was the uncrowned king of Paris. Attacks might shake him but he did not fall from his throne. He would lose his scepter only when the inconsistent populace shifted and turned toward other idols.

In the midst of this triumph a malevolent attack upon the integrity of Dumas was launched by a M. Jacquot who masqueraded under the high-sounding name of Eugène de Mirecourt. Jacquot had applied to Dumas for employment as an assistant—he had a novel up his sleeve and it needed retouching—but the novelist, either through thoughtlessness or scorn, ignored the young man. Jacquot bided his time. In December, 1844, when the successes of the *annus mirabilis* seemed to have soured him beyond silence, he despatched a curiously worded resolution to La Société des Gens de Lettres. It condemned the practice of keeping "literary workshops." "It is reported," declared Jacquot, "that a prolific pen contrives by active unworthy devices to triple its means by hiring humble assistants, from whom he buys work at so much a page. We have now the spectacle of a man coming down from the throne of genius to step into the mud of traffic, and setting up a shop for thought." The assembled members of La Société des Gens de Lettres, among them the Academician Viennet, Félix Pyat, Masson, Molé-Gentilhomme, the "Bibliophile Jacob" and a rather confused Maquet, stirred uneasily. They were quite aware at whom this attack was directed although no names were mentioned. Jacquot proceeded: "This man should not be allowed to fling away the mask and set himself up as a coryphée of shame. He should not lay his hand on Reputation, that white-winged maid, to drag her through the mire and violate her before public gaze." The assembly listened to this drivel without a word. M. Viennet, who detested Dumas, looked cross-eyed down

his nose. There undoubtedly was a kernel of truth in what Jacquot had to say. There sat a squirming Maquet to prove it. Nevertheless there was too much smoke, smoke of bombastic rhetoric, smoke of manifest venom, for the small blaze that certainly existed. Collaboration was no crime; and if the assistants of Dumas were content to remain nameless the moral question involved was rather small. There was the duty of the author toward the public, of course; that might be considered. As M. Viennet cleared his throat to speak the door opened and Dumas entered. An embarrassed silence greeted him, a silence he did not observe at first as he dug a plump fist into Viennet's ribs, wrung the hand of Maquet and clapped "Bibliophile Jacob" on the shoulder. Someone handed the resolution of Jacquot to Dumas. He read it hastily, his face flushing at the innuendoes; then he burst into a rage and emphatically denied employing assistants. A moment later he recovered himself and publicly acknowledged Maquet, much to the discomfiture of the modest assistant. It was obvious that Dumas was confused, taken by surprise and uncertain of what to say. His vanity was affronted, it is to be suspected, as much as his sense of guilt was awakened. It would be a long and complicated story, this explanation of his methods of collaboration. In what way could he make clear how much of himself was in his books and how his own mind permeated, almost magically, that of Maquet, for example? The meeting of La Société des Gens de Lettres came to an uncomfortable termination after the passing of a weak resolution that it "was urgent to regulate the principles of collaboration in literary works."

Jacquot, however, was not finished. He had merely cast the first stone. Now he was preparing a boulder calculated to smash to bits the reputation of Dumas. Early in the next year, 1845, he published at his own expense a bitter pamphlet called *Fabrique de Romans: Maison Alexandre Dumas et Cie.* It sold widely and created an instantaneous scandal, for it was crammed with spicy detail, malevolent description and a long series of serious indictments against Dumas as a writer. Accusations were made concerning the indebtedness of Dumas to other works and to a long procession of assistants. The charges of Granier de Cassagnac were revived and enlarged. Novel after novel and play after play were dissected and traced back to purportedly original sources. Minute details of plagiarism and shameless filching from

helpless writers crowded the pamphlet. Not satisfied with his attempt to destroy the integrity of Dumas as an author he tried savagely to destroy him as a man. "The appearance of M. Dumas is pretty familiar," he wrote, "the figure of a drum-major, the limbs of a Hercules in all their conceivable extension, prominent lips, African nose, curled head and bronzed face. Scrape his hide and we find the savage underneath. He exhibits the marquis and the negro at once, but the marquis scarcely goes below the skin. The marquis plays his part in public; but in private life he betrays the negro. He flings his gold out of the window, flies from one love to the other: blonde or brunette, it is all one. There we have the marquis. The sex, though it may be dazzled by an ancestral name and a lavish prodigality, is obliged to have recourse to a smelling bottle to neutralize a certain doubtful perfume. *There* we have the negro. Does he travel? He swears at the postillions and pays the guides lavishly. When he arrives at an inn, he stoutly damns the host, turning everything topsy turvy. Marquis again. When he gets home, he drags off his clothes and goes to his work in the picturesque *déshabillé* of our first parents. He flings himself on the hearth like a Newfoundland dog; he breakfasts, snatching from coals roasted potatoes, which he devours without peeling. Negro! He loves to frequent places and prostrate himself before kings—Marquis! Like the chief of an Indian tribe, to whom travelers present beads, M. Dumas loves everything that glitters. He has ribbons of all kinds, decorations of every country. Such toys turn his brain. Negro all over! In fact he is a most original and fantastic personage. He is a boaster and a swaggerer: at one time proud as Satan, at another as familiar as a city-grocer; today, blustering, tomorrow a coward. Caprice is his law, and the first impulse sways him."

Dumas summoned Jacquot to court with the result that the author of *Fabrique de Romans: Alexandre Dumas et Cie.* was sentenced to fifteen days' imprisonment. The damage had been done, however, and the accusations hung over the career of Dumas like a storm-cloud for the rest of his life. He had been tarred with *mercantilisme littéraire* and the stain was never to be removed. Jacquot's attack had unleashed a pack of lesser jackals who traduced Dumas continually, invented the wildest tales about him, enlarged the gossip and ridiculed him with that savagery peculiar to a certain type of Frenchman. If Dumas suf-

fered beneath the storm of libels and sneers he did not show it too much. He paraded the boulevards, he entertained, he wrote, he laughed and he loved. He joked about his "collaborators" and he could afford to do so. The wave was still rising with Dumas on its crest. His indignant son might rush into the offices of a newspaper that had printed some of these libels and tear up the papers, but the father was content to sit back and listen complacently to the snarling of the wolves. Let them show their teeth. He knew precisely how much he was indebted to his collaborators and how much they were indebted to him. Let these collaborators, whose minds he seemed to pick like the veriest sneak-thief, write books of their own and show what they could do without him. Let the public decide between them. Who was it who brought the inventiveness, the dash, the crisp, sustained dialogue, the ebullient characterizations to these *feuilletons* which charmed all Paris? Was it Maquet? Was it Paul Lacroix? Was it Fiorentino? Was it Mallefille? Was it Paul Meurice? No; it was Dumas, Alexandre Dumas, who conceived so much that he required hacks to carry out his innumerable schemes, just as Michael Angelo had required anonymous stone-cutters to aid him in quarrying divine forms out of hard marble.

Vilification and legal complications did not stop the flood of books proceeding from the pen of Dumas. Saint-Beuve, worried about the future of letters, might complain about the enormities of the industrial age, and Jules Janin might grumble about the curse of the *feuilleton,* but the workshop of Dumas and Maquet continued to issue books. The theater lured Dumas only faintly at this time, although there were two productions that require mention, one of which eventually plunged him again into the febrile whirl of stage life.

With the aid of Maquet he wrote a dramatic version of *Vingt ans après* which, under the title of *Les Mousquetaires,* was produced at the Ambigu-Comique on October 27, 1845. Mélingue, a handsome young actor whom Madame Dorval had discovered in Rouen, played the part of d'Artagnan. When Mélingue advanced upon the stage to announce the author he coupled the name of Auguste Maquet with Alexandre Dumas and the worthy assistant, sitting in a box with his family and never expecting such an honor, burst into tears. Dumas had been watch-

ing the young Duc de Montpensier, and when he saw that impressionable prince wince and turn pale at the scene of the execution of Charles I he rushed back stage and ordered the gruesomeness of the action lessened. Later he paid his respects to the Duc de Montpensier. The duc asked why so excellent a play should be produced at a secondary theater. Dumas replied: "Because I have no theater of my own, and to have such a theater a Government license is necessary." The prince grew thoughtful and a dim hope sprang up in the breast of Dumas. A week later Dumas was summoned to Vincennes and there the Duc de Montpensier informed him that he had begged a license from Duchâtel for a new theater for Dumas and that the novelist might, if he wished, call it the Théâtre Montpensier. Dumas realized that here was the opportunity to conquer another world. Heretofore his plays had been produced by directors over whom he had no power; with the Théâtre Montpensier at his disposal, however, he could do exactly what he wished, produce whatever he chose and engage what actors he liked. Louis-Philippe, hearing about the prospective theater, called his son to him and ordered him to have his name removed from the undertaking. "Princes are not allowed the excitements of bankruptcy," he dryly remarked. Dumas, therefore, had to content himself with the title, Théâtre Historique. A company was formed to float the enterprise; the Hôtel Foulon and the adjoining cabaret, L'Épi-scié, on the Boulevard du Temple, were bought and within a few months laborers were at work demolishing the old buildings and raising the Théâtre Historique.

The second production by Dumas during this period was *Une Fille du Régent,* dramatized from the romance of the same name. It was produced at the Théâtre-Français on April 1, 1846, and it ran for fourteen performances. Dumas, very likely, was not too interested in this production; he had more important matters in hand. The Théâtre-Historique was rising slowly on the Boulevard du Temple and near Saint-Germain another amazing edifice was nearing completion. During the laborious days of 1844 Dumas, troubled by the countless visitors to Saint-Germain, determined to rear himself a house somewhat secluded from the town. Between Saint-Germain and Pecq and near Marly-le-Roi he found an excellent site for a dwelling and calling in an architect he discussed the possibilities of a modest house. But as the

discussions went on the edifice grew in structure and by the time building actually began he had planned a château-villa of some size and great expense. In July, 1844, he invited a number of friends to view the site and made an engagement with them to see the finished building on that day three years hence. Near Marly-le-Roi stonemasons, carpenters, diggers and painters went to work raising the château in which Dumas intended to settle himself like some benevolent old king who had conquered the world. The summer of 1846 passed to the agitation of all these enterprises. It is amusing to view Dumas at this time, already stout, growing a trifle grizzled, contributing to half a dozen periodicals an endless series of instalments of romances, hurrying to the Boulevard du Temple to see how the Théâtre-Historique was progressing, rushing down to the site near Marly-le-Roi with suddenly conceived additions to the château, cultivating the young Duc de Montpensier who now succeeded the lamented Duc d'Orléans as his patron, reveling at the Villa Médicis with charming young actresses, dressing louder than ever, creating rare dishes for friends, and using Paris for a playground as though it had been designed particularly for him. Somewhere in Italy a forgotten Ida, Marquise de Pailleterie, lived by herself and somewhere in Paris a middle-aged woman called Marie-Catherine Lebay observed this splendor from afar.

## II

One September morning Dumas found in his mail a note from M. de Salvandy inviting him to dinner. This was important. M. de Salvandy was Minister of Public Instruction for Louis-Philippe. Arrayed in his most elaborate gilet, with several fobs dangling and clutching an expensive cane, Dumas repaired to the home of M. de Salvandy. The dinner proved to be excellent. M. de Salvandy broached his subject directly after the dessert while Dumas in the pleasant relaxed stupor of the satisfied *gourmet* leaned back and politely refused the proffered pony of brandy. M. de Salvandy was talking about Algiers. Dumas opened his eyes as his mind reverted to that hot morning in 1830 when he had dismissed his dream of a voyage to Algiers with Mélanie S. in order to carry a gun to the barricades. That had been sixteen years ago. The Minister of Public Instruction explained that the French people did not know enough

about their African colony and that a volume written about it by some popular author might lessen that ignorance as well as have some political significance. A readable book full of color and anecdotes. Similar to those *impressions de voyage*. . . . M. de Salvandy sipped his brandy and eyed M. Alexandre Dumas. "What arrangements have you made for the winter?" he inquired politely. "I never make arrangements," replied Dumas. "I am like a bird on the branch of a tree. If there is no wind, I stay there; if a wind comes, I open my wings and fly with it." Apparently the wind was about to blow south. The insouciant "bird on the branch" forgot the half-dozen *feuilletons* he owed various periodicals. M. de Salvandy mentioned a sum he proposed to grant the traveling author who undertook the expedition. Dumas remarked modestly that he would supplement that sum by three times as much if he were going. "You would not be doing it economically," murmured the Minister. "Really, my dear Minister," protested Dumas, "if you imagine that I practice economy, you must allow me to say that, for a Minister of Education, you are very imperfectly educated." M. de Salvandy cleared his throat. "When can you start?" he asked. "I should require a government vessel to be put at my disposal—for myself and my friends," continued Dumas, thoughtfully. M. de Salvandy demurred, then agreed. "I suppose you are busy just now?" he inquired. "I shall have to sell some railroad stock," explained Dumas. "I can do that in two or three hours." Then, as an afterthought, he added: "And I shall have to finish off a few novels. That will take a fortnight. I will start for the south in a fortnight."

The idea appealed vastly to Dumas as he wandered home that night. Algiers. Dark-faced men in turbans and veiled women with stained fingernails. Contemptuous-nosed camels padding by the forgotten ruins of an old civilization. Bazaars crowded with the rich stuffs of the East. What was the continuation of *Joseph Balsamo* compared to this prospect? His contracts could lie in abeyance for three months. The Théâtre-Historique and the chateau near Marly-le-Roi could rise from the earth without his presence. The idea appealed even more strongly the next evening when, dining with the Duc de Montpensier at Vincennes, he broached the subject and the young prince, approving it, added: "It would be better still if you were to visit Spain on your

way to Algiers. I should like you to be present at my wedding in Madrid on the twelfth of October." That settled it. The railroad stock was sold. A special passport was secured from M. Guizot for Alexandre Dumas, "traveling on a mission from the Minister of Public Instruction." Alexandre *fils* was encountered on the boulevards. "I am going to take you with me," remarked the father. "Where?" demanded the young man, envisaging a delightful dinner. "To the Frères Provençaux?" "No, no," returned Dumas. "To Spain . . . to Algiers." "Oh, very well," said the son, "we are off to Spain, then." Letters were despatched to Auguste Maquet and Louis Boulanger. Maquet, seated on the grass belonging to M. d'Aligre on the Ile de Chatou and complacently fishing, received his letter, read it, dropped his rod and hurried back to Paris to buy a trunk. Boulanger, standing before a white canvas on which he intended to paint his salon picture for 1847, thought the matter over for five minutes, dropped his brushes and began to rummage through his studio for his misplaced valise. On the third of October all the world seemed to be gathered in the courtyard from which started the Laffitte and Caillard diligences. Adieux were made. Dumas saw that his three large trunks bursting with new clothes and his six chests of guns and pistols were safely installed in the vehicle. A horn blew and off the diligence started to the cheers of friends. A quarter of an hour later Dumas, Maquet, Boulanger, Alexandre *fils* and a negro domestic whose name, Eau de Benzoin, had been shortened to Paul, were aboard their train, and the locomotive was snorting showers of bright sparks into the night air, leaving behind it Paris, a half-built theater, the skeleton of a château, some unfinished novels, an unpainted canvas, six or seven broken contracts, one or two forgotten love affairs and several bewildered and indignant editors.

It was a figure of importance who ventured upon Spain, a guest of royalty and a special envoy from the French government who traveled with a suite, clothed himself in resplendent garments and accepted with a twinkling gravity the courtesies of the thin-bearded hidalgos. Madrid glowed with life and color; there were songs in the streets; dancers with clicking castanets; dark-eyed women with mountainous combs from which fell their lace mantillas like white waterfalls;

long-faced Dons with crafty eyes and parchment-skinned foreheads; gypsies with pale bosoms and smouldering glances. The young Duc de Montpensier walked through the unending series of marriage fêtes with his betrothed, the slim sister of Isabella of Spain, and as close behind him as possible walked Dumas. On the twelfth of the month the elaborate ceremony turned a Spanish princess into a French princess, and the novelist who had been a poverty-stricken youth from Villers-Cotterets stood beside the son of the King of France and signed the marriage contract as one of the witnesses. Afterward the Grand Cordon of Charles III was presented to him, still another decoration for that chest already bespangled with orders. When the wedding ceremony was over Dumas, augmenting his party with Desbarolles, the palmistry expert, and Giraud, the artist, completed a brief tour of Spain. Barcelona. Malaga. Cordova. Seville. Cadiz. The usual adventures befell him. The atrocious quality of the food was appalling. "In Italy your food is bad, and the only good *restaurateurs* are French; in Spain you have no food at all, and the good *restaurateurs* are Italian!" He cursed the execrable *posadas* and consigned the disobliging *posaderos* to a warmer place than Spain. He discovered one way of circumventing these greasy purveyors of inedible food; he pre-empted the kitchen of each inn he visited long enough to prepare one meal with his own hands. When he was not cooking he was observing the Spaniards with an attentive eye. The women drove him to distraction. When the Andalusian girls danced before him he grew lyrical. "What eyes! What feet! If I do not describe the feet of these lovely women, it is really because their feet can hardly be said to exist!" The cachucha. The olé. The vito. The fandango. Anita dancing on the table while the glasses crashed to the floor. The white silken calves of Carmencita and Pietra. They had heard about the French romancer and were eager to see him. . . . "It seemed just as if I were a Sultan entering his harem, minus the eunuchs." But when he kissed the thin, blue-veined hand of Anita he realized at once that he had committed a *faux pas*. To Maquet he confided that these girls were of a *vertu féroce*. At the House of Seneca in Cordova the princesses were not so cold; but Dumas and his friends had made a vow of chastity before they left Paris and, having kissed the willing foreheads of the inmates of this temple of pleasure, they departed.

There were bull-fights to witness, theatrical managers to greet, enthusiastic townsmen still exhilarated by the adventures of d'Artagnan to smile upon, a private bull hunt organized by the Comte d'Aguila to thrill one, Alexandre *fils* to watch, for he lagged behind the party and lost himself for a day or two at a time. No journey Dumas had ever undertaken proved as successful as this triumphal tour of Spain under the powerful protection of the Duc de Montpensier and the French ministry. There were no disappointments, no humiliations, no disturbing visits from foreign police officials, nothing but smiling welcomes and enthusiastic receptions. It was suggestive of the travels of an Eastern potentate, of a powerful Monte Cristo passing gorgeously through a civilization that bowed low before him.

Le Véloce, commanded by Captain Bérard, rode at anchor in the harbor of Cadiz. It was a war-steamer of two hundred and twenty tons which plied as a despatch boat between Oran and Tangiers. Dumas boarded it. He was received with the honors befitting a governmental officer, presented a complimentary letter from Maréchal Bugeaud's secretary and assigned to his quarters. On November twenty-first the vessel drew out of the port of Cadiz while Dumas and his companions, minus Alexandre *fils* who was lost again, stood on the deck and watched the receding coast of Spain. The waters were calm and, except for the violent seasickness of Maquet, the crossing to Tangiers was uneventful. Trafalgar was passed and Dumas meditated the history of England and France. He thought it might be summed up in six words: Crécy, Poitiers, Agincourt, Aboukir, Trafalgar and Waterloo. Yet, he thought, England might disappear from the surface of the earth and the half of the world upon which she weighs so heavily would applaud; but were the torch that blazed in the hands of France extinguished half of the world, thrust into impenetrable darkness, would emit a cry of agony and despair. It was in the early evening, two or more days later, that the mountains of Tangiers, crouching shapes like languorous lions, loomed in the clear African twilight. As the boat churned into the harbor Dumas could hear the distant howls of hyenas and jackals, lonesome ululations that drifted across the desolate hills. Here at last was mysterious Africa, the land of Jinns and outlandish monsters, of sly slant black eyes and figures muffled

in white, of high shrill horns and thudding drums, of long-barreled guns and Arabs in dusty bournouses, of bearded Jews in long caftans and fat suspicious-eyed Turks. He could smell the strange odor of the Orient. The travelers were eager to get ashore and observe this land that was as old as Time, this strange edge of civilization that bordered the womb of ancient history—the Mediterranean. Among the curious spectacles Dumas witnessed was an elaborate Jewish wedding. He talked to Arabs and he wandered through the narrow streets and bazaars. Then returning to Le Véloce, for this stop was but a brief foretaste of Africa, he saw the anchor raised and the bow of his vessel turned toward the Pillars of Hercules. Gibraltar was reached, Gibraltar inhabited by English soldiers and monkeys, and there Alexandre *fils* was found awaiting patiently the arrival of the boat. He had occupied his time in writing poetry. The British governor of Gibraltar, Sir Robert Wilson, "a magnificent old man of sixty-six or sixty-seven years," welcomed Dumas heartily, pressed some Moorish pottery upon him and witnessed his departure with reluctance. On the twenty-sixth of November the war steamer reached Tetuan and here Dumas learned that his boat had been assigned originally to pick up some French prisoners who had been captured by Abd-el-Kader. Dumas insisted that Le Véloce carry out her original assignment and the boat was turned toward Melilla where, according to rumor, the unfortunate Frenchmen, under the command of Colonel Courby de Cognord, were to be found. On arrival there it was discovered that the released prisoners, weary of waiting for their rescue ship, had gone to Djema-r-'Azouat, and there, as guests of Colonel Macmahon (later to be the famous Maréchal of the Second Empire, and still later a President of the Third Republic) Dumas found them. He arrived in time to take part in a huge banquet given by Macmahon in honor of the prisoners. The few days of quick journeying in search of the French soldiers had excited Dumas to a high pitch and the triumph of the culminating banquet seemed to have a curious effect upon the imaginative brain of the romancer. He began to think that he had rescued the prisoners himself, when in point of fact he had merely chased after them in a vessel that was, he admitted, a *"mauvais marcheur."* By the time he returned to Paris he was certain that he

had played an instrumental part in the deliverance of his militant countrymen from the treacherous clutches of Abd-el-Kader.

The day after the banquet at Djema-r-'Azouat, Dumas, eager to be the first to communicate the great news to the French officials, agreed to Captain Bérard's desire to proceed at once to Algiers. It was during the evening of November twenty-seventh that the vessel departed from Djema-r-'Azouat. The next day and night and the morning of the day after they crept along the coast. Dumas, Desbarolles, Boulanger and Alexandre *fils* were on deck most of the time while Maquet, who had bumped his head against a low beam, and Giraud, who was sick from fear of seasickness, kept to their cabins. About nine o'clock on the morning of the twenty-ninth the cry of "Algiers! Algiers!" brought the ailing couple into the sunlight. The African city lay before them, beginning at the sea and climbing the mountainous background to Fort de l'Empereur. As Le Véloce doubled the pier prior to dropping anchor Dumas orientated Algiers in its sun-splashed surroundings; to the right stretched the blue sea, to the left the plain of Mitidja extended from Rassauta to Ben-Afroun, and in the rear the peak of Atlas rose over Cape Matifou. France in Africa. It stirred the novelist to see the familiar uniforms of the officers congregated along the piers and to hear the language of Paris spoken by the clustering groups of white-robed figures. Disembarking with celerity Dumas immediately communicated the news of the deliverance of the French prisoners from Abd-el-Kader. It was received with the proper excitement by the military officers but with a disappointing lack of enthusiasm by the speculators, commercial travelers and bourgeois merchants who merely asked, "What prisoners?" Another disappointment awaited him. Maréchal Bugeaud, the Governor, was absent and would not return for a fortnight. Dumas's ardor was dampened, for he had been especially recommended to Bugeaud and was confident of receptions and entertainment from him. General de Bar, now in command, was an excellent fellow but he was an unimaginative soldier from whom no particular guidance was to be expected. Very well. Dumas decided to profit by the absence of Maréchal Bugeaud and visit Tunis. He presented his letter putting Le Véloce at his disposition to General de Bar. The General, uncertain as to what

powers had been placed in the hands of Dumas, referred him to Vice-Admiral de Rigodie. The Vice-Admiral, also dubious as to the etiquette of the matter, decided to honor the writer's request and sanctioned the departure of Le Véloce for Tunisian ports.

Dumas, now in complete control of the war-steamer, forgot the objective of his commission and departed toward the east. A brief halt at Bizerta was made and Le Véloce then proceeded to Tunis, entering the bay one fine day when the sun turned the huddled houses into a blaze of white. Twenty-one shots from the ship's cannon saluted the African city and the echoes, heard among the ruins of Carthage, announced that Alexandre Dumas had arrived. The visit to Tunis proved pleasant and instructive. Dumas visited the bazaars and purchased rich hangings, carved woodwork, pottery, jewelry and furniture. He studied the Moorish and Arab women, noticing particularly their fine eyes and their inclination toward grossness as they aged. He amassed a quantity of notes on the habits and appearance of Arabs, Moors and Jews. He visited the holy Marabout of Sidi-Fathallah and secured an interview with Sidi-Mohammed, whose favor he won by presenting him with a French newspaper verifying the safe arrival in France of the Bey of Tunis. Sidi-Mohammed was so pleased that he presented Dumas with the Order of the Nicham. The ruins of Carthage were visited and on the grey crumbling wall Dumas inscribed the name of Chateaubriand with the point of his knife. A solemn pilgrimage was made to Chapelle Saint-Louis. At Bona Dumas met the lion-killer, Gérard, from whom he heard extraordinary stories of the chase, stories which he set down in his notebooks and rewrote and sold when he returned to Paris. Tunis was left behind and a halt was made at Constantine. There Dumas purchased a red-eyed, mangy, ferocious vulture for twelve francs. He baptised it Jugurtha, and against the advice of Maquet who shuddered whenever his own eyes encountered the red malevolent stare of the bird, announced that he would take it back to France. Jugurtha was placed in a large cage and conveyed by coach from Constantine to Philippeville. From Philippeville there was a fatiguing walk of two miles to Stora where Le Véloce awaited her distinguished group. Jugurtha's cage was too heavy to carry, so the bird—it was now in a fury of rage because of the many indignities that had befallen it—was

removed from its prison, a long rope was attached to its scrawny neck and Dumas began to drive it before him like a turkey. Jugurtha scornfully soared into the air. Yanked down forcibly by the rope the bird swooped upon the plump leg of Dumas and removed a generous slice of the calf. Dumas slashed about him with a stick and almost decapitated Jugurtha before the bird, surrendering with sullen reservations, fell in with the arrangement and stalked gloomily to Stora and aboard Le Véloce. Desbarolles, Boulanger and Alexandre *fils* were weak with laughter at the spectacle.

## III

When Dumas returned to Paris two storms burst over his bushy head. If he had expected to return in triumph wearing his new decorations, the Grand Cordon of Charles III and the Order of the Nicham, he experienced a disappointment. An angry conclave of editors pounced upon him much as a pack of hounds leap at a bear. The great playboy, so regardless of duties and promises, so expansive in ambition and intermittent in execution, had exasperated even his closest friends. They were not willing to welcome him with the fanfare he expected, to listen to his embroidered tales of embassy in Spain and Africa, to ignore his procrastinations and defalcations. Not at all. He had abused their confidences, disrupted the serialization of his *feuilletons* in their periodicals and angered their subscribers. Dumas, bustling into Paris in mid-January, 1847, overloaded with baggage, guns and Tunisian wood-carvers, to say nothing of Jugurtha, found a serious action at law confronting him. No less than seven periodicals were plaintiffs in the action: *La Presse, Le Constitutionnel, Le Siècle, Le Commerce, La Patrie, Le Soleil* and *L'Esprit Public.* Dumas despatched his Tunisians to Saint-Germain to carve the woodwork for his château, took a hasty glance at the nearly completed Théâtre-Historique, engaged a few actors and then faced his formidable array of antagonists. The attack against him was led by Doctor Véron of *Le Constitutionnel* and Émile de Girardin of *La Presse.* Doctor Véron's attitude needed no explanation, for the romancer and the editor had never been close friends; but it was strange to discover Émile de Girardin in this *galère.* What was the matter with the

fellow? Did he not understand that France had called Alexandre Dumas to Madrid and Algiers and that patriotic duties came before those silly bits of paper called contracts? Émile de Girardin preserved a very long and aggrieved face and proceeded with his legal battle. There was no time for Dumas to expatiate on his Spanish tour and his African trip. The stage for his immediate actions was already set and it was a large and dusty courtroom.

The incidents of these proceedings might well have served an astute librettist as material for an *opéra-bouffe*. When the hearings opened before the first chamber of the Civic Tribunal of the Seine on January 30, 1847, the courtroom was crowded to suffocation with writers, editors, actresses and curiosity-seekers, for it was rumored that the great Alexandre Dumas would appear in person to plead his cause. Perhaps he would be wearing all his decorations. He did appear—minus the decorations, however—and Paris laughed for weeks after at the memory of his naïve and bombastic defense. The case against Dumas was simple and obvious. In March, 1845, he had concluded an agreement with Doctor Véron of *Le Constitutionnel* and Émile de Girardin of *La Presse* by which his services would be reserved to them exclusively. Dumas promised to furnish nine volumes a year for five years and publish in no rival periodicals. This agreement was adhered to until October of the same year when the two editors were surprised to find various publications announcing new works by the author. Dumas was summoned before them but he extricated himself from their accusations in his usual indefinite way. To Doctor Véron he promised a new work, *La Dame de Monsoreau*. It arrived in scraps at the most impossible hours, generally just when *Le Constitutionnel* was going to press, and flung the editorial rooms into a state of "continual perturbation." The situation at *La Presse* was even worse. *Joseph Balsamo* had been running there and the last instalment, appearing just before the Spanish trip, had ended with these lines: "After this there was little left for the young man except to die. He closed his eyes and sank upon the ground." There, declared the indignant advocate for Émile de Girardin, the character had remained for six months while M. Dumas went hunting lions in Africa. In short, Dumas had kept none of his promises, only partially fulfilled his agreements, accepted payments for which he had made no return and

embarrassed the editors. Damages of fifty thousand francs were demanded.

Dumas's defense was a triumph in burlesque. He bellowed; he slapped his chest; he harangued the court on the serious purposes behind his absence from Paris. Had he not been the only Frenchman invited to the wedding of the Duc de Montpensier? Was it not true that the Grand Cordon of Charles III had been awarded him not as a man of letters but as Alexandre Dumas-Davy, Marquis de Pailleterie? There was a murmur of laughter in the courtroom. Truly, this Dumas was a magnificent buffoon. The gesticulating orator proceeded, blandly indifferent to the chuckles he aroused. He had gone to Tunis, whose prince, though a native, was not a savage. That prince, unfortunately, was in France but the brother of that prince, Sidi-Mohammed, had received him with the honors due an envoy and had pinned on his breast the Order of the Nicham. In Algeria he had collected the most precious documents which he would place in the office of the court within four days. It would take him that length of time to make a book of them. Finished with these grandiose flourishes he considered the case against him. He admitted the agreements with Doctor Véron and Émile de Girardin but pleaded that they did not cancel his anterior agreements with the other periodicals mentioned. "I had eighty volumes to publish with them," he declared in a loud voice, "to wit: *Monte Cristo, Le Fils de Milady* (*Vingt ans après*), *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne, Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge,* the end of *La Guerre des Femmes, Le Siècle de Louis XIV, L'Histoire de la Peinture,* and others, forming altogether eighty volumes or two hundred and twenty-six thousand lines to publish; such an amount, assuredly, that if the Academy sat down to do it (and they are forty) they would be hard pushed during the two years." He proceeded: "I did what no man has ever done before. I commenced the publication of five romances at one time in five different journals and I carried the work to its end. My adversaries are there to say if I have ever given a single line that was not in my handwriting. Three horses, three domestics and the railroad were hard put to it to transport my copy and bring back the proofs. At two o'clock in the morning my servants were again on the road to Saint-Germain." Alternately laughing and gasping with amazement his auditors

listened. There was a distinct touch of megalomania in this rolling defense, an elephantiasis of the ego that was as disturbing as it was laughable. What would happen to a man who went on at this rate? It was about this time that Doctor Cabarrus prophesied that Dumas would be insane within two years. The novelist was becoming too convinced of his ascendency, too certain of his vastness in the French scene. Still the extraordinary performance in the courtroom had in part accomplished its purpose, and when the Civic Tribunal handed down its decision on February nineteenth, the day before the Théâtre-Historique opened its doors, the damages petitioned by Doctor Véron and Émile de Girardin were considerably reduced. Dumas's debt to Véron was fixed at six and one-third volumes to be furnished within a specified time and three thousand francs penalty. The award to Girardin was similar except that the amount of writing was raised to eight and one-fifth volumes. One wonders if Dumas did not understand the psychology of his French audience and overplay his megalomania for its benefit.

The tumult of this storm had not died away before a second tempest burst. The scene was the Chamber of Deputies and the subject was the African trip on Le Véloce. On February tenth, M. Castellane, an officious deputy whose immediate desire was to embarrass the government, rose from his chair and put a sharp question to the Ministry. Was it a fact that a well-known contractor for stories had been paid a large sum to make Algiers known to France and to the . . . Chamber? Had this person (*ce monsieur*) been provided with a vessel at the expense of the State? "I say nothing of the burlesque side of the transaction, but there is a certain delicacy to be observed as regards the navy and its sailors, to say nothing of the vessel having been used as a Royal packet." The Minister of Public Instruction was requested to justify this unusual act of placing a naval vessel at the disposal of a private person. The Minister of Marine was also asked why Le Véloce had been removed from her proper route and how much coal had been consumed by her and what the cost of it was. A second officious deputy, M. de Malleville, abetted M. Castellane in the onslaught upon Dumas and his mission. The government ministers were slightly incoherent in their replies. The Minister of Marine intimated that

Maréchal Bugeaud had written that the affair was a *malentendu,* that Le Véloce, regularly employed between Tangiers and Oran, had stopped at Cadiz in its regular course but that it had gone to Algiers instead of Oran because of the misinterpretation of an order. The cruise from Algiers to Tunis was due to the importunities of the writer who had insisted that such a journey was necessary for the accomplishment of his mission. M. de Salvandy was called to the Tribune. In a haughty and final manner he closed the matter by admitting that the mission had been simply for Algiers, but that he did not find it consistent with the dignity of the Chamber to ask him to reveal what passed between him and a man of letters.

The episode was an excellent example of petty politics and malicious insult. We may gauge the meanness of the attack upon Dumas by the fact that he was referred to throughout the proceedings as "this person" (*ce monsieur*) although he was without a doubt the best known figure in the French capital. As for the justice of the attack, it is rather difficult to discover. Dumas certainly had a "mission"; it was so stated in his passport. Le Véloce was delegated to carry him to Africa; if he seemed to be going too far in requisitioning that vessel for the Tunisian venture it must be remembered that he alone was the director of his mission. It is true that Le Véloce was expected to drop Dumas at Oran after picking him up at Cadiz but Le Véloce was also expected to pick up the French prisoners at Melilla, and, presumably, to carry them to Algiers from which port they might be sent back to France. As a matter of fact, there seems to have been just as much uncertainty on the part of the officials, M. de Salvandy, the Minister of Marine, Maréchal Bugeaud and Vice-Admiral de Rigodie, as there was presumption on the part of Dumas. Any one of these persons could have prevented the Tunisian trip if they had desired so to do. It was patent that the novelist had been the butt of an aggrieved opposition.

Dumas, for his part, defended himself by an abrupt gesture. He challenged M. Castellane to a duel, and the faithful Maquet challenged M. de Malleville. Both deputies took refuge behind the inviolability of their governmental positions and the affair simmered down to mutterings on their part, some resonant declarations on that of Dumas, and a gnashing of teeth on the part of the Jacquot-

Mirecourt group, who, expecting to witness the demolition of Dumas, saw instead a reversal of public opinion in his favor. Indeed, the public could not remain out of sorts with the novelist for any length of time. Although he might exasperate them by failing to fill his obligations, his personality was a mollification in itself. He did not possess the mental *hauteur* of Hugo or the small snobberies of Balzac. His vanity was as frank as that of a Fiji monarch covered with colored bits of ribbons and glittering shells and seated on a throne. He could enjoy the flamboyance of his attitude as well as his retainers. What could a public do but forget its irritation before such a magnificent pose? Even Émile de Girardin, now that the unpleasant courtroom scenes were over, could not refrain from renewing his friendly relations with Dumas. The two storms passed, then, and the novelist found himself none the worse for them. He was still in the ascendent. The finishing touches were being put to the Théâtre-Historique; the players were already in rehearsal for the first performance. The walls of the château near Marly-le-Roi were raised and furniture was being moved in. The market for *feuilletons* was still abundant. Thackeray's open letter in *La Revue Britannique* accusing Dumas of "lifting" two stories without acknowledgment was tempered by eulogy. The cold weather was lifting and the sun shone longer every day in Paris. God was in His heaven. Louis-Philippe was on his throne. The future was roseate.

During the afternoon and evening of February 20, 1847, a *marchand de chansons* wandered up and down the long queue of impatient people along the Boulevard du Temple and peddled hastily printed broadsides. The queue had been there since the night before, had partaken of thick soup and hard bread, reposed on beds of straw that littered the pavement, drained cups of watery coffee in the pale dawn, shuffled restless feet throughout the long day and now, to divert itself, purchased the broadsides still wet with fresh ink and bellowed the stanzas printed upon them. The air was *Veux-tu t'taire*. The title was *Le Théâtre Dumas*. The words ran:

*On dit qu'au théâtre Dumas*
*On pourra prendre ses ébats;*

*Vive l'auteur des Mousquetaires,*
*Veux-tu t'taire, veux-tu t'taire,*
*Bavard, veux-tu t'taire.*

*L'théâtre ouvert, aussitôt*
*On y jouera la Rein' Margot*
*Fureur bien sûr elle va faire.*
*Veux-tu, etc.*

*Dans les pièces de poison*
*On y mourr'ra pour de bon*
*Au public ça pourra plaire.*
*Veux-tu, etc.*

*De son bonnet d'coton*
*Faudra s'munir, dit-on,*
*Car séjour il faudra faire.*
*Veux-tu, etc.*

*Celui que l'appétit prendra*
*Table d'hôte trouvera;*
*On mangera bon et pas cher.*
*Veux-tu, etc.*

*Les Funambules, les Français*
*Ne feront plus pour leurs frais.*
*Debureau se désespère.*
*Veux-tu, etc.*

*Les directeurs de Paris*
*De ç'la ne sont pas ravis*
*Ils seront forcés d'mieux faire.*
*Veux-tu, etc.*

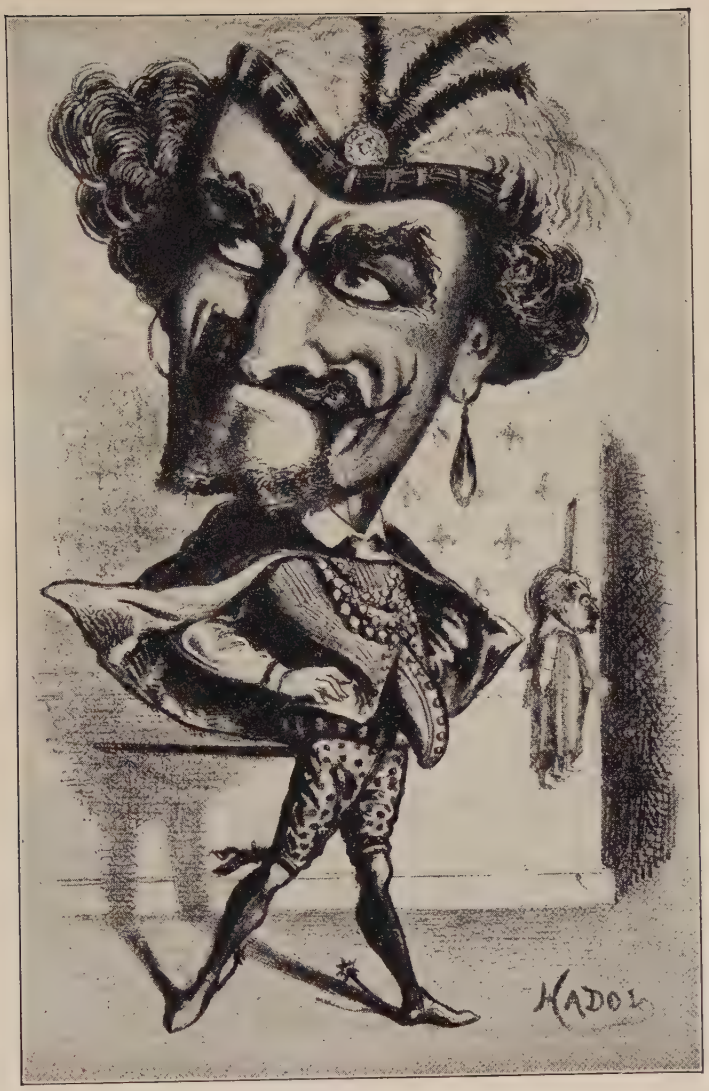
It was the opening night of Alexandre Dumas's Théâtre-Historique. The impatient mob, waiting to view the first performance of *La Reine Margot,* gazed upward at an imposing façade. Two huge caryatides

designed by Klagmann supported a balustraded balcony behind which opened a demi-cupola with elaborate murals by Guichard. Above this arched opening was the pediment dominated by a nude figure of the Genius of the Seven Arts and on each side were groups representing the Cid and Ximena and Hamlet and Ophelia, personifications of tragedy and drama. Tall pillars lined the entrance beneath the balcony and a blaze of light shone from the four great lamp-posts. When the doors were opened and the crowd poured into the theater a happy innovation greeted them. Instead of the usual semi-circle which maintained in the playhouses of the time Bellu and Daunay, the architects, had created a long oval, broad rather than deep, with the lines of boxes and galleries parallel to the stage. The decorations by Sechan were lavish; the plafond was painted with allegorical figures and there was a hemicycle of famous poets and actors. Before the audience which crowded the seventeen hundred seats and massed in the passageways at the rear hung a vast red and gold curtain from behind which came the noise of shifting scenery and the barking of an excited stage manager. Hippolyte Hostein, formerly of the Ambigu and now the nominal director of this new house, hurried to and fro, excited for the first time in his life. This was a new venture. There had been nothing like it in the history of the French stage. It was, in effect, intended to be a European theater as well as a national playhouse.

Dumas witnessed the realization of one of his dreams in the Théâtre-Historique. He now controlled his own house. He could produce what he pleased in any way he chose. All this was due to the young Duc de Montpensier and when the prince entered his box accompanied by his suite Dumas was voluble in his thanks. It was an excellent theater, comparable with the best in Paris. It was solid, too. Had not Dumas tested its strength by inviting several thousand Parisians to a preview of the house? A thousand flattered men and women had crowded the theater, unaware that their presence had been asked merely to test the strength of the flooring. For Dumas it was a propitious time for a new theater. Buloz had just been appointed administrator of the Théâtre-Français and there was an estrangement between that yellow-faced editor and the novelist. Mademoiselle Mars, old and neglected, was dying in the rue de la Lavoisier. Opera was

beginning to come into its own. Mademoiselle Alboni, described as the elephant who swallowed a nightingale, was about to make her début at the Opéra-Comique, and Verdi's *Jérusalem* had been accepted by the Opéra. Alfred de Musset's *Un Caprice* was in rehearsal at the Théâtre-Français. New faces and new ideas were beginning to appear in a disquieting manner, just as the Reformists were beginning to show their teeth against the bourgeois reign of Louis-Philippe. In England a heavy-lidded man named Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte observed the agitation of the Reformists with some interest. Dumas, whose great days were bound up in the era of Louis-Philippe, must have realized his good fortune in possessing the Théâtre-Historique, although when the great red and gold curtain rose at six-thirty on the evening of February 20, 1847, he could not have known that it marked the peak of his career in the dramatic life of France.

An excellent company under the direction of Hostein had been gathered for the first performance. Etienne Mélingue, the distinguished romantic actor who had already made his worth known in the plays of Dumas, acted Henri de Navarre. Rouvière, one of Dumas's discoveries, played Charles IX and carried away the honors of the evening by his remarkable personification. Marguerite de Navarre was acted by Madame Perrier-Lacressionnière. Other members of the troupe were Messieurs Laferrière, Bignon, Lacressonnière, Colburn and Boutin, and Mesdames Atala Beauchène, Person and Lucie Mabire. *La Reine Margot,* an acknowledged collaboration with Auguste Maquet, was an extremely long play and when the curtain fell upon the fifteenth scene it was after three o'clock in the morning. The Duc de Montpensier sat bravely throughout the nine hours of performance, and so, too, did Théophile Gautier, who wrote the next day in his critique of the drama: "We must ask the indulgence of the reader, for, without being like good old Homer, we are likely enough to be found nodding as we write, and dropping our pen in the middle of a sentence. We did not get to bed until broad daylight." In spite of its length the effect of *La Reine Margot* was tremendous and the Théâtre-Historique was triumphantly launched on its first year. The public crowded the theater for the very reason that eventually it stayed away. In these plays refashioned from the popular *feuilletons* of Dumas they heard a phraseology that they not only loved but knew




ÉTIENNE MELINGUE
*As Chicot in* La Dame de Monsoreau

ÉTIENNE MELINGUE
*As d'Artagnan in* La Jeunesse des Mousquetaires

by heart. They saw in physical action upon the stage the characters they had pictured in their mind's eye as they devoured the daily instalments. But this was sure to pall, because at best only a part of their curiosity was engaged. When the troublous days of revolution came—and they were only a year away—the audiences forsook the dramas of the Théâtre-Historique for the dramas of the streets. But for the present Dumas was at the high pitch of his popularity, the most famous figure in the capital, and he moved like an Eastern king through all this adulation. On the first day of May, Louis-Philippe's fête-day, when the various *fonctionnaires* appeared at the Louvre to pay their respects to the King, a heavy figure was to be observed in the grand gallery, striding along in the habiliments of a commandant of the National Guard and with a bosom suggestive of a jeweler's window in the Palais-Royal, for upon it glittered five crosses, four vari-colored decorations and three collars. Dumas was going to pay his respects to the King.

Play succeeded play during the first year of the Théâtre-Historique and all of them proved either greatly or fairly successful. On the twentieth of May *L'École des Familles* by Adolphe Dumas (who was no relation of Alexandre) was produced. But Dumas was somewhat averse to presenting dramas by other writers. Maquet and he could satisfy the demand. *Le Mari de la Veuve,* the charming bit Dumas had written with Anicet Bourgeois and Eugène Delrieu in 1832 and which had been produced during the fatal cholera month, was revived on May twenty-fifth. On the eleventh of June *Intrigue et Amour* was presented, a hurried and mediocre adaptation from Schiller by Dumas, and it scored only a fair success. It was on August third that the second great success aroused the audiences of the Théâtre-Historique to loud demonstrations. A dramatization of *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* was staged. It rose steadily to the *foudroyant* triumph of the scene of the Revolutionary Tribunal where the condemned Girondins sang *Mourir pour la patrie.*

*Par la voix du canon d'alarmes,*
*La France appelle ses enfants.*
*"Allons, dit le soldat, aux armes!*

*C'est ma mère, je la defends.*
*Mourir pour la patrie,*
*C'est le sort le plus beau, le plus digne d'envie!"*

Dumas, listening to the song as he stood in the coulisses, said to a bystander: "Our next revolution will be performed to that tune." He was right. Six months later the enraged bourgeoisie was parading the boulevards and roaring *Mourir pour la patrie* while the aged and bewildered Louis-Philippe was fleeing to England.

After the long performance of *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* Dumas, now installed in his chateau at Saint-Germain, discovered that it was too late to travel home and so begged asylum of Mélingue for the night. Mélingue took Dumas home with him, showed him his bed-chamber and, exhausted from his performance, retired to his own room and climbed into bed. He was dozing when he heard a thunderous racket in the next chamber. Starting up the actor hurried to the door of Dumas's chamber, rapped sharply and cried: "What is the matter?" A round perspiring face peered through the door. "Nothing," said Dumas, "nothing at all. I am arranging your chamber. The *armoire à glace* was deplorably placed and the bookcase is much better where I have put it." Mélingue thought that four o'clock in the morning was too late, or too early, to arrange furniture. He said: "You have done enough butchering this evening at the theater." Dumas had been revising the *mise en scène* at the Théâtre-Historique to the nervous irritability of the players. "I forbid you to change anything in my house. The furniture looks well enough where it was and the *mise en scène* of my apartment pleases me as much as the *mise en scène* of *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* displeases you." He blew out Dumas's candles and sulkily returned to his bed. Next morning Dumas repeated to Mélingue: "I assure you that your bookcase would be much better placed by the wall toward the court and your armoire on the side toward the garden. If you try it you will see."

One other production was made at the Théâtre-Historique during 1847. It was the translation of *Hamlet* which Dumas had made with Paul Meurice and which had been privately performed at the Saint-Germain theater some time before. Rouvière again made a distinct impression, this time in the rôle of the Prince of Denmark. Dumas,

gazing back over the list of productions, congratulated himself. The Théâtre-Historique was a manifest success. It had drawn to itself a large public and the receipts for the first year totaled seven hundred thousand francs. The prospects for the future seemed bright. He had his theater and his château between Saint-Germain and Marly-le-Roi. What he would do when the flame burst and the throne fell was another matter. His sense of the dramatic would guide him then. But during the summer and autumn and early winter of 1847 it did not seem that any throne would fall. The *Réformistes* bellowed and planned their banquets of demonstration, but the entire Revolutionary movement, if it could be dignified by that name, was like a damp keg of powder. Here and there it sputtered feebly but there was no thunderous detonation nor did one appear to be in prospect. The Paris of 1847 like the Paris of 1869 did not see the shadow on the other side of the door. That portal was always blown open by unexpected guns.

In July of this prosperous year the château near Marly-le-Roi was ready for visitors. Mélingue christened it Monte Cristo. Dumas invited some five or six hundred guests to the fairy palace, not quite completed, which Plante had reared. The guests saw rising before them an edifice half château and half villa embowered in trees and surrounded by a luxuriant garden. Before it stood the massive form of the proprietor dressed in an elaborate National Guard uniform, a broad smile on his face, large hands extended in welcome. Now he was Monte Cristo himself, the man who owned the world, whose mines of gold were all the journals of Paris which printed *feuilletons* and a theater which was crowded nightly, and he assumed the rôle with the gorgeous histrionism of a negro. The chattering visitors, journalists, authors, actors, actresses, hangers-on in the Bohemian milieu of the capital, walked up the path toward the giant above whose head rose the two high campaniles of his impossible dwelling. They gazed upon Monte Cristo and were alternately impressed and amused. The white stone walls were covered with exquisite traceries copied from those of Jean Goujon in the Louvre by one Choistat and the curving lines of the great bow windows were carried up into the roof. Prominently carved in large stone letters was the motto Dumas had taken for himself, *"J'aime qui m'aime."* Around the building

ran a balcony, such a balcony as might shelter some Roxane while a hidden Cyrano de Bergerac cried out his love from the shadows beneath the moon-splashed walls. Leaded windows, turrets, flamboyant weather-cocks and carven faces started out from the glittering stone of the curious façade. The assembled guests looked and whispered among themselves. They spread over the grounds, wandering through the leafy gardens and crowding the circular terrace which ended in a grassy slope and down which artificial streams flowed in cascades. They paused before the miniature island not far from the central building and admired the toy water-gate and the two-foot moat across which Dumas might step like a new Gulliver in Lilliput. They gazed at the theatrically constructed kiosk on the island and saw red letters on every brick that composed it. Advancing they discovered that each one of the bricks was inscribed with the title of one of the plays or books of Dumas. He had created enough titles to cover the entire building. Peering through the quaint windows they discovered that the interior of the small kiosk was a tiny hexagonal room with a ceiling of sky blue studded with golden stars and cross-beamed with oak which had been carved into imitation foliage. Blue cloth hangings swayed from the door and windows, and a lofty and extravagantly festooned mantelpiece filled one corner. The petiteness of the chamber limited the furniture to one chair, a large and strong one, and a small solid table. But that was enough. Upon the table were ink, paper and quill pens. Above the door was the warning, *"Cave canem."* It was the den of Dumas, the sanctum sanctorum of the *feuilleton.*

Turning back to the château-villa the guests trooped through open doors flanked by dark-skinned Moslems in flowing robes and turbans, the two slaves of the Bey of Tunis whom Dumas had brought back from Africa. Inside they found a waiting room with walls delicately carved in fret-work and with designs created by Klagmann, a *salon* hung in costly cashmeres, a dining room walled with oak paneling and a small chamber which Dumas affectionately indicated as *"la chambre Arabe."* This amazing room, so calculated to create the atmosphere of the loving *tête-à-tête,* was a sort of super-Oriental divan divided by Moorish arches. Its walls and ceilings were a single design of beautiful arabesques recalling the supreme moulding of the Alhambra. The arches were hung with violet velvet and about the lower

half of the fretted walls ran a series of mirrors. The guests gazed and sighed. The lights were dimmed in this chamber; the air was redolent with the gentle scents of harem perfumes. Like the star-studded kiosk on the little island this, too, was obviously one of the private workrooms of Dumas. It was unfinished as yet—indeed, it would never be completed—but it was sufficient for its appointed task.

Upstairs, up elaborate stairs, went the procession of guests and they found a series of chambers imitative of varying periods. There was a Gothic room, cool and twisted and slightly sardonic in its atmosphere. There was a Renaissance room piled with curious furniture and walled with reproductions of great paintings. There was a Henri II room, wide and airy and not too crowded with chairs and bed. There was a Louis XV room in which Madame du Barry herself might have slept. The guests discovered new wonders at every turn, rich stuffs from Africa, hangings, chairs, old weapons, curiosities ransacked from the antique dealers of Paris, vases and pictures. They hurried downstairs and up again, around the grounds once more where they came upon a coach house and stables, in which four blooded horses neighed and rolled their eyes. Then there was the conservatory, the fruit and flower gardens, the dog-kennels where half a dozen hounds bayed, the aviary where Jugurtha, the mean-spirited vulture, glared viciously from his corner; the poultry yard and the monkey-house where three apes squealed and gabbled at the peering actresses. It was like an Arabian Nights dream, the dream of a mind that fed itself on the Thousand and One Tales of Sheherazade. One last touch. Leon Gozlan paused before a huge frieze of medallions representing all the famous authors from Homer to Victor Hugo. The stone faces of the literati gazed down in speechless amazement at their surroundings. "I do not see you there," said the journalist to the strutting figure in the National Guards uniform. Dumas drew himself up and replied, "Me? Oh, I shall be inside!"

Divine Monte Cristo!

Life in the château-villa proceeded on a scale as elaborate as the architecture and furnishings. Open table was maintained always, and although guests were expected to confine themselves to a week-end they made unexpected appearances every day and at all hours. The

adventurers and parasites flocked from Paris to make the most of this golden opportunity, wolfing rich foods, borrowing as much as Dumas could give them and even settling down until better prospects turned up for them. A succession of fair and frail women (among them Madame Scrivanek, *Allemande ragoûtante et stupide*) passed through the high door above which was printed, *"J'aime qui m'aime,"* and assumed the duties of chatelaine. These *femmes adorables* devoured the income of Dumas. No matter how many thousands of francs he earned from his writings and his plays, they vanished as speedily into the bright air above Monte Cristo. The tremendous vitality of Dumas was never more apparent than during the few years he lived at Monte Cristo. By day he worked, retiring to the star-studded kiosk and deliberately turning his château over to the hordes of visitors. Clad in white trousers and shirt, he sat by the window and wrote, having his meals brought to him. He could hear the loud laughter from his extravagant château and it seemed to please him as he buried his shaggy head deeper in the *feuilleton* of the moment. By night he played, sitting at the head of his table, ordering champagne when the *vin ordinaire* was exhausted, leading the entire gathering to the hotel at Saint-Germain when the provisions at Monte Cristo ran out, and enlivening his feasts with the most elaborate entertainments. Naturally it could not last. Before the first year had sped away the creditors, those doleful vultures who always followed Dumas, were circling down on Monte Cristo, bootmakers, tailors, wine merchants, provision dealers, jewelers; but Dumas met them with a bland smile, kept them to dinner, increased his debts by ordering more and sent them away puzzled and disgruntled. He had a way with him, they admitted, and when they were in his presence they thought him the best fellow in the world—no wonder the natives about Marly-le-Roi shouted gaily to Monsieur Doumass—but when they reached Paris empty-handed a growing irritation possessed them. He had filled them with cajoleries and promises and fine food and they had agreed to supply him with more goods.

Meanwhile the political temperature was rising. Dissatisfaction with the ministry of M. Guizot and the narrowness of Louis-Philippe mounted to a climax. The *Réformiste* demonstration in Paris was forbidden and the Time-Spirit turned the corner of 1848 with a solemn

and threatening face. At the Théâtre-Historique Dumas presented a dramatization of the first half of *Monte Cristo.* It was played in two parts, the premières taking place on February third and fourth, and it seemed to please the audiences, although these people were already engrossed in more serious matters. The political vanities of Dumas did not assert themselves as vibrantly as they had in 1830, in spite of the fact that he was manifestly friendly to the *Réformiste* movement. But when the February Revolution burst, that demonstration which became an insurrection and then, at the eleventh hour, was turned into a revolution by excitable soldiers, the ardour of Dumas flared forth. While Louis-Philippe was fleeing from Paris sobbing, *"Comme Charles X!"* and the mobs were parading the boulevards singing *"Mourir pour la patrie,"* the novelist, in his National Guard uniform, was attempting to rouse the apathetic folk of Saint-Germain. He was at the Chamber of Deputies in Paris when the proposal to make the Duchesse d'Orléans Regent was vetoed. To Émile de Girardin, editor of *La Presse,* he wrote: "To you and to the *Constitutionnel* belong my novels, my books, my literary life; but to France my words, my opinions, my political life. From this day forward there are two persons in the writer, and the public man will be the complement of the poet." The old ambition was burning within him once more, but not so fierily, not so demonstratively as it had years before. There were reasons for his lukewarm attitude. In the first place, he was older and more lethargic. In the second, he was bound by curious ties and obligations to the Orléans dynasty; for Louis-Philippe had been his first patron, the dead Duc d'Orléans had been his second and the Duc de Montpensier was his third. Again, the Revolution seemed like a regrettable accident, an explosion that had not been expected nor desired. Still further, Dumas had flourished under the reign of Louis-Philippe and perhaps he suspected the obvious truth that the era of the *feuilleton* and the Théâtre-Historique would pass with that ruler. At the same time, Republican sentiments bubbled up within him and the idea of a seat in the Assembly followed closely the climax of the Revolution. Was not Lamartine a part of the provisional government that now ruled the anarchistic city of Paris? Why should he not take his seat as one of the governing fathers of France?

In the midst of the turmoil and angry redistribution of power, then, Dumas began to consider the possibility of a political career.

Dumas did not realize that the February Revolution of 1848 was the beginning of *la chute* for him, that his great days were finished. An era had been abolished with Louis-Philippe, and Dumas belonged to that era. The new state of affairs, the domination of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, meant another mental attitude, a fresh social consciousness and another literature. The placid days when the *feuilleton* spelled excitement were over. The reorganization of the Second Republic was to bourgeon into the extravagant era of the Second Empire, and not for twenty-five years was Paris to know the peacefulness which had marked the reign of the Orléans dynasty. Dumas's first gestures during this new era were untactical for a man ambitious of election to the National Assembly. He established a periodical, *Le Mois,* with the motto, "God dictates and I write." God dictated many curious things during the short career of *Le Mois,* among them a protest against the removal of the equestrian statue of the Duc d'Orléans from the courtyard of the Louvre, a demand that the Duc de Chambord be recalled from exile and another that the government of Algeria be restored to the Duc d'Aumale. On March fourth Dumas wrote to the exiled Duc de Montpensier: "I was proud, my lord, to be called your friend when you occupied the Tuileries; now that you have left France I claim that title." In Saint-Germain an angry Republican attempted to shoot him for calling the prince "my lord." Another furious burgher of Saint-Germain observing Dumas's breast covered with medals and orders shouted during a political meeting: "There's a Republican with a fine lot of crosses!" Dumas replied: "If I wear these things it is not for vanity, I swear to you; but purely and simply from not wishing to disoblige the parties that gave them. Where is the good of annoying these poor kings!" In the face of anti-Orléanist sentiment such conduct was little less than mad. Yet Dumas with a sublime ignorance of his own precarious standing searched for a favorable constituency from which to take his place in the National Assembly. He decided against the department of the Seine-et-Oise because the natives regarded him as "immoral." The department of the Aisne was dismissed because of the raid on Soissons in 1830.

Eventually he decided on Yonne, a district that produced many grapes. His campaign there was a farce from beginning to end. At Joigny he was received with hisses and one fellow shouted: "Ho, Ho! Negro!" There was an uproar and for a time it seemed that the meeting would end in a free for all fight. One of the electors cried: "You profess yourself a Republican; yet you assume the title of Marquis de la Pailleterie, and you have been secretary to the Duc d'Orléans." From the platform Dumas answered: "Yes, I once claimed that title, of which, as being my father's, I am proud; that was at a time when I had made no name of my own. Now I am someone on my own account; I call myself plain Alexandre Dumas, and all the world knows me. You, *Monsieur,* as well as any other—you, an obscure nobody, who come here to see me and insult me, just that you may be able to go away and tell people tomorrow that you have known the great Dumas . . ." Before the conclusion of the meeting Dumas held his audience in the palm of his hand by his witty anecdotes, his sentimental appeals, his gestures and his evident sincerity. Yet he was not elected to the National Assembly. When the votes were counted his defeat was decisive. The ambition to have a place in the Assembly was never to be satisfied any more than that other ambition to sit in the Academy.

So busy had Dumas been during his political campaign that he hardly noticed the drop in his fortunes. The public which was formerly so avid of historical romances and plays no longer cared for them. History was being made on the great stage of Paris, contemporary history, and it was infinitely more vivid than the resuscitated times of Louis XIV. Why should audiences sit in the Théâtre-Historique and applaud mimic battles and conspiracies when they could view kindred actualities in the streets, shudder at the June riots, observe Cavaignac, the dictator, riding down the boulevard, or see the pale expressionless face of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte raised in the National Assembly? So the audiences at the theater on the Boulevard du Temple dwindled, and instead of the 700,000 francs taken in during 1847, the paid admissions in 1848 reached 300,000 francs. The repertoire, of course, had been disturbed by the Revolution, and except for the production of *Monte Cristo* the only new play offered was *Catilina* which had its première on the fourteenth of October.

The less said about this play the better. Books continued to come from the industrious pens of Dumas and Maquet. *Les Quarante-Cinq* and *Le Vicomte de Bragelonne* were issued to readers too disturbed by contemporary events to receive them as they had received *Les Trois Mousquetaires* and *Le Comte de Monte Cristo.* Then there were *Impressions de voyage: de Paris à Cadix* and *Impressions de voyage: Le Véloce ou Tanger, Alger et Tunis,* presumably the two works that M. de Salvandy (now, alas, vanished from sight) had desired as a result of Dumas's "mission" to Africa; but who cared about Africa at this time? The topics of immediate interest were Paris and whether Louis-Napoleon would be elected President of the new Republic. He was. This election opened the door to the new era, but for the moment it seemed that nothing would be changed. Although the Théâtre-Historique had slumped in receipts during 1848 Dumas was sanguine for 1849. After all, 1848 had been a crisis, a troubling of the waters. Now, however, the whirlpool had quieted. Maquet was so certain that Dumas would make a vast fortune that on March 10, 1848, just after the February days, he signed an agreement by which he turned over to Dumas all his author's rights in the novels for the lump sum of 145,200 francs, to be paid in monthly instalments over a period of eleven years. It seemed like money in the bank to Maquet for the unfortunate young man did not realize the precariousness of Dumas's status.

Slowly at first and then with increasing speed the fortunes of Dumas tumbled from their high estate. The attempt to bolster up the Théâtre-Historique during 1849 was but partially successful. Four plays were produced, three of them dredged from the popular romances, but they failed to kindle their audiences as *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* had done in 1847. On February seventeenth *La Jeunesse des Mousquetaires* was presented, but not even the wiry d'Artagnan of Mélinque saved the performance. On July twenty-sixth an elaborate production of *Le Chevalier d'Harmental,* with Numa as Buvat and A. Roger as Roquefinette, failed to arouse the spectators. This drama was followed on October first by *La Guerre des Femmes* which marked the return of the trusty Mélingue in the rôle of the Baron de Canolles. One more production remained, *Le Comte Hermann,* presented on the twenty-second of November. This play

DUMAS TOWARD 1850

*He had just passed the peak of his popularity*

ALEXANDRE DUMAS, *fils*

was interesting as a comment on the growth of Dumas as a dramatist, for it was a modern drama, a return to the type of *Antony* and *Angèle*. The fierce passion of those earlier days had disappeared, however, and in its place was a mellower attitude toward the social scene. Not one of the four plays was an outstanding success and when the end of the year came Dumas realized that the Théâtre-Historique was running into debt. Except for one, *Le Collier de la Reine,* the books published in this year were negligible. It was difficult for Dumas to comprehend that the great days were over, but the fact must have been evident to him as he cast about each week for money to meet his obligations. Monte Cristo had developed into a white elephant and the proprietor was already flinging art treasures and decorations to importunate creditors. One day the worried Dumas heard a shrill-voiced young actress explaining that *"son protecteur"* was thinking about buying Monte Cristo for her. "Your friend is rich, then?" he demanded. "Very rich," chirped the actress. "He is an angel. It seems to me, sometimes, that he has wings." *"Des ailes de pigeon!"* grumbled Dumas passing on his way.

Quite suddenly he found himself fighting with his back to the wall. The Second Republic of the Prince-President had done what Jacquot and his pack could not do—destroyed him financially. If he thought about it at all it must have seemed strange to him, his rocket-like career that had shot upward in 1844 and then dropped in a shower of sparks after five years of splendor. Fortune was an inconstant jade, at one moment pressing the riches of the world on a beggar and at the next hurling a king from his throne. She was like the city of Paris, fair, frail and forgetful. Dumas began to know again the pinch of poverty; all that he possessed was being swallowed up by the expenses of the Théâtre-Historique and Monte Cristo. When Madame Dorval died penniless in 1849 he pawned the Order of the Nicham, his most elaborate decoration, to pay for her funeral. Émile de Girardin refused him small loans. Friends began to fall away and new faces appeared in positions of importance. The shadow of the spirit of the impending Second Empire lengthened along the boulevards. At the Théâtre-Historique the productions continued through 1850, *Urbain Grandier* on the thirtieth of March and *La Chasse au Chastre* on August third, but the actors played to empty benches.

Dumas turned to other theaters from which he might hope for a little money but except for one or two one-act productions there was no help there. He was a man bowed beneath two burdens, the Théâtre-Historique and Monte Cristo. He could not put them down nor could he carry them. His debts grew to mountainous proportions and the bailiffs made their appearance at Monte Cristo, dismantling the château of its most extravagant furniture. A few books were flung in the face of disaster but they were of little avail. Early in 1851 the complete crash came. Monte Cristo had been fully mortgaged to carry on the Théâtre-Historique, and the theater that had been launched so successfully under the auspices of the Duc de Montpensier closed its doors. It was all over. Nothing was left but the vast barn of a theater that would be torn down presently to make way for one of Louis-Napoleon's boulevards. The creditors took over Monte Cristo and Dumas was homeless.

On the early morning of December 2, 1851, Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte, Prince-President of France, surprised Paris with a *coup d'état,* putting into execution those secret plans he had kept in a private portfolio ominously marked "Rubicon." That day the dismayed populace discovered that the Assembly had been arbitrarily dissolved, martial law proclaimed, and a new constitution drawn up, a plan of government to be headed by a president elected for a term of ten years. This project was to be submitted immediately to the "good people" of France for vote. As most of the opposition leaders and antagonists of the new dictator had been quietly arrested in their homes during the night and spirited away to prisons, the people in the streets found themselves without leaders. Still, though the masses seemed apathetic and would not pour out to the barricades as they had in 1830, there was desultory fighting. These reckless demonstrations reached their peak on the fourth of the month when barricades were raised in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle, and the rue Montorgueil. Musketry-fire swept these flimsy defenses and innocent bystanders at the corner of the Faubourg Poissonnière were shot down. Cavalry regiments followed by infantry (for the army stood firm for Louis-Napoleon) charged down the contested streets and the stains of blood left on the cobbles that day

were to be the last *souvenirs* of the enraged Republican spirit in France for nineteen years. Victor Hugo, who was abroad early and in imminent danger of his life from the Bonapartists, witnessed his ideal France crashing down in blood and dust and shame. Before Jonvin's glove shop there was a pile of corpses, among them an old gentleman still clutching his umbrella and a youth with a monocle in his eye. The Maison Dorée, the Café Anglais, and the Café de Paris, once centers of defiant propaganda, were raked by the fire of the troops. A little boy running into a toy-shop was shot down on a heap of toys. Eight black-nosed cannon were wheeled into position before the carpet warehouse of Sallandrouze. M. Piquet, a seventy-year-old doctor, was shot as he sat reading in his drawing room. Jolivard, the painter, standing before his easel, crashed to the floor with a bullet in his skull. Boyer, the chemist, was bayonetted by the lancers as he lounged behind his counter. Before the Théâtre des Variétés lay fifty-two corpses, eleven women among them, pathetic reminders of how kings come to their thrones and dynasties are changed. Through this horror passed Victor Hugo, pale and despairing, with the agitated Juliette Drouet in search of him. In a few days it was all over; the bodies were carried away; the blood was washed from the grey stones; and the waxen-lidded Prince-President observed Paris lying in the hollow of his hand. A furtive-eyed and nervous man in the garments of a lower-class *ouvrier* hurried through the station at Brussels on the fourteenth of the month. It was Victor Hugo fleeing from the city he would not see again until 1870. December twentieth a popular plebiscite approved the drastic gesture of the *Coup d'État* by 7,439,216 votes.

Louis-Napoleon was thankful. On the first day of 1852 a solemn Te Deum was celebrated at Notre Dame de Paris, a service expressing gratitude to God that France had been saved for a Bonaparte. There was a thick fog over the city and hoar-frost armored the slender trees in the parks. There were grey-green slabs of ice in the Seine. In the Place du Parvis before the ancient cathedral there were lines of troops, their standards snapping in the chilly air above them. From the Invalides the cannon could be heard firing ten reverberating shots for each million of votes that sanctioned the *Coup d'État*. Above the carved portal of Notre Dame hung a great red tapestry with the total

vote embroidered in gleaming letters of gold. Flags. Banners. Oriflammes. The tambours rolled when Louis-Napoleon, clad in the uniform of a general of division, entered the cathedral followed by the sly Magnan and the obsequious de Saint-Arnaud. He had achieved his purpose; he knew that the next step was simple. The second of December had been his Eighteenth Brumaire. Had he not prepared for this gesture during the past three years by shackling the press, suppressing antagonistic and liberal associations, corrupting the army (where already they were shouting, *"Vive l'Empereur!"*), and propitiating the powerful Church Party? It was unfortunate that General Changarnier had never received his order from the slow-moving French patriots and put the ambitious Prince-President in a *panier à salade* and driven him to the Fortress de Vincennes without delay. But General Changarnier, on this day of rejoicing, was being transferred to the Fortress of Ham (where once Louis-Napoleon had cooled his own heels) and with Changarnier were Cavaignac, Le Flo, Lamoriciére, Bedeau and Charras. At the same time Louis-Napoleon made a gesture. He liberated great numbers of Republican prisoners (men caught in the dragnet of the night between the first and second of December) from the Fortresses of Mazas, Vincennes, and Mont-Valérien; unfortunately, however, they were all lesser individualities and not capable of disturbing demonstrations against the dictator. Even the release of Thiers from Versailles and the permission accorded him to return to Paris meant little.

Where was Dumas during all this excitement? Was he behind the barricades in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine or bearing a musket in the Faubourg Poissonière? Was he in the shoving mass of spectators on the Place du Parvis when Louis-Napoleon thanked God for placing France in his eager hands? He was in neither place for the year 1851 had been a period of exasperation and mental horror to him and he had lived through it fighting his own losing campaign with fortune and ill-disposed to quarrel for France or a Bonaparte. He was like a negro slave fleeing through a swamp and pursued by howling bloodhounds. The swamp was Paris. Wherever he set his foot the ground gave treacherously. The howling bloodhounds were importunate bailiffs. If he stopped at all during this troublesome flight it was to laugh for that was the one thing that misfortune could not steal away

from him. Whether he was on the crest of the wave or in the trough of a muttering sea his ebulliency remained unimpaired. Before the *Coup d'État* he had made a few last desperate bids for success. In April he had witnessed the presentation of his *La Barrière de Clichy,* a spectacular military melodrama calculated to please the Prince-President, at the Théâtre National, but its success had been small. During April and May the third and fourth parts of his huge dramatization of *Monte Cristo, Le Comte de Morcerf* and *Villefort,* had been produced at the Ambigu-Comique. Scanty audiences who had already forgotten the first two parts of *Monte Cristo,* viewed it disdainfully and turned away toward other things. *Monte Cristo* belonged to the era of Louis-Philippe. Dumas saw that his predicament was extreme. Dust gathered on the empty seats of the Théâtre-Historique and the statue of the Arts gazed woefully across the Boulevard du Temple. At Marly-le-Roi a dismantled château was knocked down at auction to the highest bidder and the outrageous edifice into which the reckless proprietor had poured hundreds of thousands of francs was sold for but little more than thirty thousand. Jugurtha, the misanthropical vulture, who had been purchased as a curiosity by the owner of the hotel at Saint-Germain, grew grey and philosophical as he observed the indecent divagations of fortune. If he mused at all he must have thought with a grim pleasure that the indignity suffered by him when he had been driven like a turkey down the hot road to Stora had been wiped out by the subsequent indignities heaped upon his unfortunate master. The glory of Monte Cristo had departed. Dumas, then, was too absorbed in his own misfortunes to take any active part in the *Coup d'État.* Unlike Hugo, he did not possess the integrity of fanaticism. Besides, the memory of his unfortunate career as a politician during 1848 must have rankled still in his bosom. It was better to keep away, to hide one's self in the excitement and so avoid process-servers, bailiffs, creditors and the humiliations of defeat.

He still functioned after the *Coup d'État,* however, for on December thirtieth, twenty-eight days after the destruction of the Second Republic, *Le Vampire,* a fantastic drama by Dumas and Maquet, was produced at the Ambigu-Comique. The rôle of the mystic fairy Mélusine was played by a charming young actress named Isabelle Constant who had also made an appearance in *La Barrière de Clichy.* Once again

the spell of bright eyes was upon Dumas and his fatherly interest in this girl soon developed into a more intimate relation. *Le Vampire* was the last acknowledged offering made by Dumas to the Parisian stage before he became an exile from the city. It was curious. When he first came to Paris to live he had gone to a play called *Le Vampire* and there, sitting beside him and reading an Elzevir, he had met Charles Nodier; and now, twenty-seven years later, he witnessed a play of his own on the same subject that was, in some measure, the period set by Time to his career. Between those two dramas rested the great arc of his adventurous days. He had but little more to give Paris. He was fleeing before the furies now and his acquaintance saw little of him. During 1852 he disappeared from the public whirl. Once he protested from Brussels about an unauthorized dramatization of *Ascanio*. Had he settled there by that time? Meanwhile, the star of Louis-Napoleon rose and shone brightly and the political phenomena of the year were decisive. On March twenty-ninth the Dictatorship was terminated when the Chamber met in the Salle des Maréchaux at the Tuileries and on November seventh the Senate announced that the imperial dignity had been reëstablished in the persons of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and his heirs male. On November twenty-fifth the *corps legislatifs* declared the vote that made Louis-Napoleon Emperor. There were 7,824,129 ayes to 253,149 noes. During the night of December first Louis-Napoleon received the crown of France at Saint-Cloud and the following morning, exactly one year after the *Coup d'État,* he rode from Saint-Cloud to the Tuileries while the cannon roared, the banners waved, and the military bands played *Partant pour la Syrie*. It was as good a time as any to finally flee from this remorseless city that, except for implacable creditors, had completely forgotten him; so Dumas packed away a few precious remnants from his days of grandeur, turned his business affairs—an incomprehensible and apparently hopeless puzzle—over to a wise little Jew named Hirschler, and bade farewell to Paris. Gathering what cash he could for immediate expenses and taking with him a tiny negro lad that "the little Dorval" had once brought to him for a page, he boarded the train for Brussels. Behind him was wreckage; before him was nothing but his vigor and a determination to retrieve his fallen fortunes.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE STRUGGLING MUSKETEER

### I

When Dumas and his little negro Alexis walked out of the station at Brussels in Belgium the snarling trumpets of the new Emperor, Napoleon III, were still vibrating along the quais of the Seine. They heralded more than the change of a dynasty. They were the brazen annunciators of a new era in letters, in drama, in art, and in the delicate task of living. Romanticism was really dead. It had been in its final agonies ever since the débacle of Victor Hugo's *Les Burgraves* in 1843, and the nine years that had elapsed were no more than a long rattle in a gasping throat that had once been as sonorous as the trumpets of "the Dutchman." The polished boots of the Second Empire had stepped over a lintel whereon lay the dessicated but still feebly twitching body of Hernani. From the safe haven of the grey city of Brussels Dumas could gaze back at the monstrous changes that were taking place, at the gradual transformation of a city that had been the bourgeois capital of a bourgeois King for eighteen years and the uncertain fantasia of a Prince-President for three years. Now it was to be the seat of an upstart Emperor, the center of European gaiety to which all the crowned heads of the continent were to come, the astonishing playground of expositions and galas, of extravagant *bals* and operas and gambling and reckless women. Dumas did not pause long to brood upon Paris, but adjusted himself as quickly as possible to his new surroundings. He was penniless; he had no collaborators; it was necessary that he write furiously if he were to pay off the mountainous debts he had left behind, live with that degree of extravagance upon which he thrived and make possible in the not too distant future a triumphant return to the French metropolis. It was pleasant

to indicate, never directly, that one was in exile because of political reasons, for that sounded so much finer than to confess that one was hiding from one's creditors. It placed one on a level with Victor Hugo, for example. Since August the Sun-God had been thundering from Jersey against Napoléon-le-Petit and his *châtiments* had been the delight of the dispersed Republicans. But the more malleable nature of Dumas demurred at a definite exile that would make his return to Paris impossible until the Emperor finally fell from his throne. After all, he was primarily a writer, a novelist, a poet, a dramatist, and only secondarily a publicist and propagandist. He thrived upon the Parisian scene, and even before the newness of his exile in Brussels had worn away he was longing for the flesh-pots of the capital. What restaurants! What women! What gaiety! The realization of this desire would mean uninterrupted labors and he set himself to them immediately.

Settled at 73, Boulevard Waterloo, he began to write. His dwelling was not a second Monte Cristo, but it was a fairly luxuriously appointed house well adapted to the entertainment of the horde of French exiles who crowded the Belgian city. These men came and went, ate enormously and drank excessively; but Dumas, in his attic at the top of the house, labored through the racket and piled up sheet after sheet of blue paper covered with his even handwriting. One among these exiles who drifted to the Boulevard Waterloo proved to be a god-send. Noël Parfait, a former representative of the people and a friend of Victor Hugo, had been proscribed some time before. Penniless, separated from his wife and family by the decree of the Emperor, Parfait made the Boulevard Waterloo house his second home, and it was not long before he was installed as a member of the family and acting as secretary to Dumas. Parfait was conscientious, strict, observant, thrifty, a buffer between Dumas and his sponging friends, and soon these friends, disapproving of the tactics of the new secretary, referred to him as *Jamais Content*. He was a bore and a tribulation to them. Why did not Dumas get rid of this death's head at the joyous feast? Dumas smiled to himself. *"Jamais Content"* Parfait remained, and order evolved itself out of the chaos of the household. The new secretary managed the ménage, held the purse, became an inexorable minister of finance to Dumas, checked all

domestic waste, indicated methods of retrenchment, settled the bills regularly, fought with dishonest servants and drove sharp bargains with the sly tradespeople. He watched the wine cellar and saw that it was not completely gulped down by visitors. He forced Dumas to pay immediately for any purchases, books or pictures or clothing, that he became liable for. The result was that while there were no debts neither was there any money in the cash-box. Even Dumas became irritated and complained: "Here for the last six months I have had an honest man in my house, and upon my soul I have never been so badly off in my life!" Yet Noël Parfait was an excellent addition to 73, Boulevard Waterloo, and Dumas knew it.

*"Jamais Content"* acted as a copying secretary as well as treasurer to Dumas, and he accomplished a formidable amount of work. During the months he assisted Dumas he made four copies—one each for Belgium, Germany, England and America—of the original scripts of *Les Mémoires, Ingénue, Une Vie d'Artiste, Conscience l'Innocent, Le Pasteur d'Ashbourn, Le Page du Duc de Savoie, Catherine Blum, Isaac Laquedem, Le Saltéador, Le Capitaine Richard, La Comtesse de Charny,* and of three plays, *La Conscience, La Jeunesse de Louis XIV* and *Les Gardes Forestiers.* In the widely spaced Cadot edition of the works of Dumas this would correspond roughly to nearly four hundred volumes. Parfait, like his master, was a demon of energy. Every day the two men would mount to the attic where they were safe from the innumerable visitors, and there they would sit for the greater part of the day, each writing furiously. Hours would pass without a word. Dumas was working against time, to settle his debts, to make possible his return to Paris; Parfait was laboring for his food and lodging with a fine integrity that more than paid for them. The pens scratched ceaselessly; the copy was despatched to five countries; the drafts were cashed and applied on old debts. Back in Paris Hirschler, the admirable little Semite, was doing all that he could to compound Dumas's debts. There was a bed in this attic-studio, and occasionally, in the middle of a sentence, Dumas would stand up, stretch, walk over to the couch and fling himself upon it, falling asleep as soon as his bushy head hit the pillow. In fifteen or twenty minutes he would rise, thoroughly refreshed, and resume his composition. He put down the material that poured out of his mind with a rushing speed, never

stopping to indicate periods, commas and paragraphs. That was Parfait's function. Receiving the paper still wet with ink, the secretary would arrange the material into its finished form. In this way an enormous amount of work came out of 73, Boulevard Waterloo.

The ingenuity of Dumas was never better manifested than during this long season of travail in Belgium. He had no collaborators, no nosing jackals of letters to run down his themes for him, no anxious young men tumbling their tentative efforts upon his lintel so that he might pick them up and translate them into that smoothly flowing procession of narratives that was his peculiar product. All that he did he had to do by himself. And first of all he turned to his own life, to that surprising and sometimes ridiculous series of forays against fortune, and began to recapture it in bubbling chapters which vividly resurrected the past. Indeed it was time to recapitulate, to turn back and cast up the long disorderly account. Was he not fifty years old and a man who from his twenty-first year had been an integral portion of the creative life of the French nation? What did it all mean? What had he accomplished? From the isolated vantage point of Brussels he could gaze back at a score of years and strive to elucidate the pattern of his existence. He would write about it. He would relate these astounding episodes one to the other. He did not see his life steadily nor did he see it whole; it was rather through the golden veils of vanity that he perceived the miraculous career that was his own. Yet who could draw the dividing line between his vanity and his sincerity? Not he; not any idle reader; his audience would have to accept his enlargement, often as unconscious as it was deliberate, of the perturbed and gusty progress of his days. So in the high attic at 73, Boulevard Waterloo, Brussels, with the faithful Noël Parfait by his side, he began to set down the long tragi-comedy of his life, interlarding it with multitudinous sketches of the men he had known and the events through which he had passed. *Mes Mémoires* ran to ten volumes; it was dedicated to the honorable Comte Alfred d'Orsay, "my fellow-craftsman and my bosom friend"; it was one of the most meaty works the volatile and self-dramatizing creator had ever conceived; and it assumed its important position among the revelatory documents of the nineteenth century.

Simultaneously with this extended work (which, as a matter of fact, he did not finish until he had returned to France, and which, unfortunately, he did not carry beyond the year 1832) other labors proceeded. He would write the story of the wandering Jew, for example, carrying the career of that lost soul through the centuries, but *Isaac Laquedem* was suppressed after the second volume by the shocked censors of "the Dutchman" with the waxed imperial, and the announced thirty volumes never materialized. Then there was *Ingénue,* an amusing work which started as a serial in *Le Siècle* but was stopped by the indignant descendants of that Restif de la Bretonne who had written *Monsieur Nicolas, ou le Coeur Humain Devoilé* and *La Vie de Mon Père.* There were *Le Capitaine Richard* and *Le Pasteur d'Ashbourn,* the last a tale manifestly paraphrased from some forgotten English or German story. Anything at all was welcome fish that swam into this avid net stretched in the attic of the Belgian house. The prodigious fisherman thought of that Étienne Mélingue who had created d'Artagnan on the lost stage of the Théâtre-Historique and the result was *Une Vie d'Artiste,* an account of the early struggles of the handsome actor whom the little Dorval had discovered at Rouen. An idle reading of Iffland's *Gardes Forestiers* aroused memories of Villers-Cotterets and the life of the foresters in the surrounding woodland, and *Catherine Blum* trickled from the ceaseless pen. The abrupt finish to *Ange Pitou* occasioned by the diminishing interest in the *feuilleton* disturbed Dumas; there was no link between that book and *Le Chevalier de Maison-Rouge* and too many of the characters had been left hanging indecisively between heaven and hell; therefore the omission would have to be remedied. *Le Comtesse de Charny* was the result, a full length novel which demonstrated emphatically that Dumas could continue his *Mémoires d'un Medecin* series without the aid even of the meticulous Maquet. Some gossip of a Belgian writer occasioned another novel, *Conscience l'Innocent,* a charming book that owes something to Hendrik Conscience's *Le Conscrit. Le Page du Duc de Savoie,* written during this period, is more mysterious. Was Paul Meurice the author of this work, as he was of *Les Deux Dianes,* or did he write from a plot that Dumas had outlined? There are certain touches in this book that are obviously from the vast creative well of Dumas. Perhaps Meurice, after writing

from the suggestions of the older man, sent on his script for revision and rewriting and Dumas made it his own. There was *Le Saltéador* which Dumas later disowned but which probably was conceived with the aid of some unknown assistant. Plays as well as novels were written in this hive of an attic. There was *La Conscience* which Dumas dedicated to Victor Hugo, inscribing: "Receive it as the testimony of a friendship which has survived exile and will, I trust, survive even death. I believe in the immortality of the soul." Then there was *La Jeunesse de Louis XIV,* dedicated to the faithful Noël Parfait as a *"souvenir d'exil."* And there was *Les Gardes Forestiers,* a dramatization of *Catherine Blum.* The sun shone on Brussels and the rain fell upon the grey stone buildings; processions, both religious and lay, passed through the narrow streets, and trumpets blew in the grassy squares; but the assiduous pen in the attic at 73, Boulevard Waterloo, did not falter. Every completed page brought the writer that much nearer Paris.

All this assiduity nevertheless left Dumas some time for pleasure when he might entertain his friends or wander about the city. There were casual appearances at the playhouses when he impressed his presence upon the audiences by noisy applause. There were evenings of small talk with the congregated exiles. Once there was a gorgeous supper party where the guests reveled until dawn in the surprises prepared by their host, Spanish dancers in flamboyant shawls, singers of old French *chansons* and *tirades* by famous actors, unexpected plays on a lilliputian stage hastily erected. There was sparkling conversation, the popping of champagne corks and extraordinary foods prepared from rare recipes. Émile Deschanel described the armorial escutcheons of Chateaubriand (dead), Lamartine (forgotten), Hugo (in exile), Nodier (dead), and Dumas himself (neither dead nor forgotten but waiting his hour of release from a foreign land) which hung upon the walls of the decorated *salons.* Through the gathering of gay men and women passed the form of *"Jamais Content"* Parfait watching to see that the champagne was not wasted and that no thoughtless visitors walked away with material souvenirs of the evening.

During this period the little Semite Hirschler was accomplishing wonders in Paris. With the ingenuity of a born diplomat he engi-

neered favorable settlements of the long array of Dumas's debts, paid so many *sous* upon the franc, made promises, attended to the drafts sent to Paris by the wise Parfait, and one bright day forwarded the welcome news to Dumas that it would be safe for him to return to Paris. It was like a release from prison. The long labors in the Boulevard Waterloo ceased and an excited French author ran for the train. One fortune had been lost but it was still possible to make another. Perhaps a magazine? He was returning to Paris as empty-handed as d'Artagnan. Very well. Let the magazine be called *Le Mousquetaire*. Late in September, 1853, Dumas stepped from a cabriolet in the Place Louvois and entered the little hotel where he was to live for some time while recovering his lost ascendency. The great sea of Paris roared about him once more and his spirits were enlivened.

## II

In Paris there were both rejoicing and chagrin. The friends of Dumas greeted his reappearance with merry satisfaction, but the enemies, the clique that had sneered and hissed at "this negro," were silenced by the bitter disappointment of the writer's return. They had imagined him finished, worn out, cast aside, driven from the city, and here he was, larger than ever, gayer, carrying fresh bundles of manuscript beneath his arm, negotiating with editors, printers and paper firms, raising funds in miraculous ways and confidently establishing himself as the proprietor and editor of an impossible periodical. It was inconceivable. This man was like Antaeus; the harder he was flung to earth the stronger he rose. The object of this bitterness strode blithely along the boulevards and turned a wide smiling face toward the disconcerted jackals. He heard the belittling prophecies. "It is impossible that such a preposterous undertaking as this proposed *journal de M. Alexandre Dumas* will live." *"Merci, messieurs,"* responded Dumas, *"Le Mousquetaire* will live precisely because it is impossible." Unperturbed by evil prophecies and sanguine for the future, he proceeded to organize his journal. It would be a personal organ; everything would be entertaining and intimate; politics would be eschewed. There were enough suppressed periodicals and proscribed patriots. No, *Le Mousquetaire* would offer *causeries* on literature and

art, short stories, poems, novels, essays, personal items, and above all *Alexandre Dumas en manches de chemise*. There would be reverent genuflections to the great writers of the immediate past, Nodier, Chateaubriand and Lamartine. Editorial quarters were secured, two small ground floor rooms in the courtyard of the Maison d'Or opposite the savoury smelling restaurant of Verdier, and a tiny chamber on the third floor where the master might sit before a pine table and write. Assistants were engaged, young men such as Alfred Asseline, Philibert Audebrand, Aurélien Scholl and Henri Conscience; and the first issue of *Le Mousquetaire* appeared on November 12, 1853. In every café it was eagerly perused.

Fantasia of *Le Mousquetaire*.

It was to be expected that any undertaking by Dumas should develop into a bedlam and this magazine was no exception. All Paris flowed into the courtyard of the Maison d'Or, burst past Michel, the ex-gardener at Monte Cristo and now the hypothetical cashier of *Le Mousquetaire,* streamed through the business office where no business was ever transacted, crowded the dark little room where the "archives" were kept and pushed by the indignant business manager, Martinet, into the editorial room, a fireless chamber where the young "regulars" strove to write amidst a babble of voices. Actors, painters, sculptors, musicians, curiosity-seekers, down-at-the-heels authors, journalists, long-haired poets and crafty-eyed spongers arrived early and stayed late. All races were represented, Latins, Slavs, Germans, Africans, Hebrews from Mont Sinai, Catholic mystics from Italy and turbanned Mussulmen. The incessant hub-bub shook the windows of the surrounding houses. M. Alexandri, a Moldavian boyar, who lived in the court, ran to his window constantly and exclaimed, "I think they are slaughtering somebody out there!" Another neighbor, not less startled but with a sense of humor, would reply: "There is probably a woman suffering from pangs of child-birth in the courtyard." Verdier alone, the owner of the restaurant opposite, was undisturbed. He stood before his door rubbing his plump hands together delightedly and saying, "The police can no longer pretend that there is too much noise in my restaurant. I will send them to listen to *Le Mousquetaire.*" Dumas, in his small third floor office, would lift his head

from his copy when some particularly tempestuous outburst rose from the court, spring up in a fury from his chair, rush to the balcony and shout, "What the devil are they doing? Cutting each other's throats?" It was nothing more than ten poets, five novelists, twenty-five critics, some *fantaisistes* and a few general writers shrilly recommencing the dialogues of Plato in the heart of the business district of Louis-Napoleon's Paris.

Comparative peace reigned in the third floor office, and here only was any real work done. Dumas, seated at his pine table, covered sheet after sheet of paper. The room was as bare as the cell of a cenobite. There were no ornaments, pictures or statues, nothing but the pine table covered with a red cloth, three cane chairs and a tiny Etruscan vase holding a single flower. Dumas, meagerly clothed even in winter, bare-chested and bare-armed, bowed his crinkly head over the blue paper and wrote, wrote of anything at all; and when he ran out of ideas he would walk in the courtyard with some friend or wander along the nearby streets and gaze through windows, read signboards or watch pedestrians. Out of thin air would come an idea and back he would go to his "nest of serpents," as he called his offices, and spin it into an engaging *causerie*. Guarding the third floor study was Rusconi, the little Italian who had once been with General Dermoncourt and whom Dumas had taken into his service a long time before. Rusconi was a faithful factotum. He blacked Dumas's boots, wrote some of his letters for him and introduced the *visiteuses* to the private office. He worshipped Dumas. In his broken accent he would say: "Listen well. I saw Napoleon Bonaparte in Elba when I was a *commissaire de police;* I saw Madame la Duchesse de Berry at Nantes at the moment of her arrest when I was secretary to General Dermoncourt; and I see M. Alexandre Dumas every day. Consequently I flatter myself with having been close to the three greatest personages of this century." In spite of the precautions taken to isolate himself, Dumas could never refrain from interrupting his work when some old acquaintance appeared, and during the few years that *Le Mousquetaire* existed a heterogenous procession of people, some known to all of France and others indistinguishable ciphers, passed through the door of the Maison d'Or above which was written: *"Le public n'entre pas ici."*

The procession was unusual and sometimes amusing. There was that excellent rogue, Roger de Beauvoir, twirling his cane and scattering *mots.* The pale figure of Gérard de Nerval, escaped for the moment from Doctor Blanche's insane asylum, tramped up the three flights of stairs. Young Octave Feuillet, already known to the theatergoers of Paris, brought in some bright article. There was Méry, fresh from Marseilles and bursting with amusing tales. He was growing older now; there was a wintry touch of grey in his long hair, but his ardour was undiminshed. Théophile Gautier, his once slim form grown portly and his rose-colored gilet laid away with his memories, was another visitor who recalled the past, the bright days when all the world seemed to hang in the balance of the uncertain premiére of *Hernani.* Théodore de Banville, the sophisticated rhymster and friend of Charles Baudelaire, came to submit verses, and perhaps to speak of those strange *Fleurs du Mal* his friend was writing. Émile Deschamps, the great Émile who was a kind of ancestor of the new generation, appeared often, a red ribbon in his button-hole and pale gloves in his aged hand. The aura of the almost legendary Cénacle hovered about him. Dumas would rush delightedly toward this veteran of the Romantic days, crying, *"Une bonne révérence à mon Émile, messieurs!"* Another frequent visitor was the Vicomtesse de Saint-Mars, better known under her nom-de-plume, Comtesse Dash, a wise and worldly woman of uncertain age and rotund figure who laughed at her Dumas but exhibited a sincere affection for him. Meyerbeer, the composer, might be found deep in conversation with Madame de Girardin, formerly Delphine Gay, the tenth muse, but now an old and ailing woman. That ancient Royalist, Jules de Saint-Félix, was another familiar figure in the courtyard of the Maison d'Or. He, it was rumored, had been a page to Louis XVIII, and it was certain that he had been in the entourage of Charles X in 1830. He had written a romance called *Cléopatre,* but it had not been a success, and now in the winter of his days he was reduced to living by means of hack writing. Still another visitor was Adolphe Dupeuty, *"un gros garçon, la figure bouffie, de larges épaules,"* who gathered bits of theatrical news and gossip for *Le Mousquetaire.* Nor must Privat d'Anglemont, a huge mulatto from the Antilles, be forgotten. Erratic and Bohemian in his tendencies, he managed to eke out a meager

EMILE DESCHAMPS

*He was one of the instigators of the Romantic Movement*

SAINTE-BEUVE

living by free-lance journalism. There were Paul Bocage, the nephew of the great actor; Alexandre Weill, author of *Couronne;* Jules Viard, the future creator of the *Échos* in *Le Figaro;* Pierre Bernard, once secretary to Armand Carrel; Eugène Moreau, a retired actor who had translated Gogol's *Dead Souls;* Henri de la Madelene, Eugène Woestyn, young Henri Rochefort: personalities who took their places large or small in the eternally shifting pantheon of French letters. During the first year of its existence the contributors to *Le Mousquetaire,* besides those enumerated above, included Alexandre Dumas *fils,* Alfred Asseline, Casimir Daumas, Georges Bell, Leon Gatayes, Aurelien Scholl, Gaston de Saint-Valry, A. Desbarolles, Alfred Basquet Amédée Marteau, Comte Max de Goritz, E. Nevire, J. Nevire, Foulgues, Eimann, C. Bernis, Maurice Sand, A. de la Fizelière, Madame Adèle Esquiros, Madame Celina Ravier and Madame Clémence Badère. Two of these contributors, Comte de Goritz and Madame Clémence Badère, deserve further mention.

Comte Max de Goritz, well-built, nervous, with blond mustaches, first appeared at the Maison d'Or as "translator extraordinary" to Dumas. He purported to be a Hungarian nobleman, and people whispered that once he had acted as aide-de-camp to Kossuth. His charming wife, it was also whispered, was the daughter of the Duc de Richemont, pretender to the French throne, and grand-daughter of Marie Antoinette. For a brief period the comte made daily appearances at *Le Mousquetaire* where he translated any promising matter from German papers that might appeal to Dumas. He was gentlemanly, aristocratic in manner, educated. Philibert Audebrand, one of the junior editors of *Le Mousquetaire,* charmed by the *politesse* of the mysterious comte, appeared often in his company, dined at his quarters and beamed upon the languid Madame la Comtesse. One day Urbain Fagès, who had replaced Martinet as business manager of *Le Mousquetaire,* sat down beside Audebrand. "Are you disposed to listen to some advice?" he inquired. "Go on," said Audebrand. "You have some inclination to continue your intimacy with Max de Goritz?" "That is true." "Well, believe me when I urge you not to push things too far." The junior editor asked why. "For several reasons," replied Fagès, "and decidedly the first one is that no one knows who he is." Audebrand insisted that he did know who

de Goritz was and that Dumas himself patronized him. *"Bast!"* retorted Fagès, "That fellow is neither a comte nor a political refugee. He is a German adventurer, a Semite named Mayer, and he is guilty of a dozen crimes." "But Alexandre Dumas wrote a dedication in one of his books to the wife of this man and gave her the title of comtesse in it," protested Audebrand. "Don't you know," Fagès remarked, "that when there is a pretty woman in view our illustrious writer is capable of anything?" It was true. A few days later the Parisian police were in search of Comte Max de Goritz who had slipped out of Paris. At the Maison d'Or the affair caused a sensation which was revived some weeks later when news came that the industrious adventurer was using the name of Dumas to obtain money fraudulently from various sources in the South of France.

The case of Madame Clémence Badère was both pathetic and amusing. She was an intense and humorless creature in whose bosom fluttered a sentimental desire for the Ideal. Leaving her dull and pragmatic husband in the provinces, she came to Paris obsessed with an ambition to make a place for herself in letters. It was natural for her to gravitate toward *Le Mousquetaire;* all freaks found their way to the Maison d'Or sooner or later. Dumas, therefore, was faced one morning by a rhapsodic woman in spectacles who offered him a short story entitled *Les Aventures d'un Camélia et d'un Volubilis.* He accepted it graciously; he accepted all things graciously from women whether they were old and ugly or young and pulchritudinous. But after Madame Badère had bared her quivering soul to Dumas's sensitive ear and departed, he peeped into the manuscript, smiled to himself and carefully put it away in the bottom of the furthest drawer. It was atrocious. It was a series of barbarisms and amateurish pap. Perhaps Dumas hoped that this would be the last of Clémence Badère, that she would return to her father, the hatter of Vendôme, or to her husband. But the bespectacled muse was of a more persistent caliber. Now that she was "launched in literature" she made it a point to appear often at the Maison d'Or, to take the bewildered Michel into her confidence, to pour the yearnings of her heart out to Rusconi and to inquire for Monsieur Dumas. Dumas was always invisible. He saw her coming from a distance and fled to the privacy of his third-floor office. Madame Badère's persistency had its reward, however,

for wearied with her importunities, Dumas reluctantly disgorged the *Aventures d'un Camélia et d'un Volubilis* from the drawer and printed it. But in printing it he revised it extensively and wrote a new introduction to it. This was a blow to the pride of the author; she saw the delicate child of her brain mangled and torn beyond resemblance. In a series of letters—they would be called highfaluting today—she demanded that the tale be reprinted in its original form. Dumas, entertained with these curious documents, promptly printed them in the correspondence columns of *Le Mousquetaire.* Madame Badère retaliated by securing a sheriff's officer who enjoined Dumas to reprint the story as the author had conceived it. This was too much for Dumas, who lost his temper. He printed the first version, but with all the barbarisms underlined. The victim of this humiliation ran from lawyer to lawyer, from sheriff's officer to sheriff's officer, but could get no redress. The officers of the law would have nothing to do with her. Perhaps they had read her story. Then the irate woman sat down and aimed a shot at Dumas. It appeared in the form of a pamphlet, *Le Soleil Alexandre Dumas,* and it made a bitter comparison between the rays of the sun and the collaborators of Dumas. Having fired her shot the lady of the spectacles disappeared, and some measure of peace was restored at the Maison d'Or.

The career of *Le Mousquetaire* was as beset by financial difficulties as it was by chattering friends and importunate contributors. There was never any money in the cash-box, and from the beginning the business manager led a life calculated to drive a sane brain into gibbering idiocy. Martinet, who held this position for the first two months, almost perished from the strain. It was in vain that he mounted the three flights of stairs with long overdue bills in his hand. Dumas would wave him away with, "What do I keep you for? Pay the people and don't bother me." The perplexed Martinet, looking as though he had just fallen from a horse, would stutter, "Pay them! But, *cher maître,* there is no money in the cash-box." "No money!" Dumas would roar, "What has become of the new subscriptions that came in this morning?" Martinet would answer, "It hasn't been ten minutes since you took three hundred francs out of the cash-box for your personal requirements." The reply of Dumas would be magnifi-

cent, "Three hundred francs! What is that? Why the copy I have written today for the paper would have brought me four times that amount from *La Presse* or *Le Siècle!*" Martinet would stagger down the stairs to fence as best he could with the creditors.

Both Polydore Millaud and Villemessant, hearing of the waste and disorder in the offices of *Le Mousquetaire,* offered to associate themselves with the periodical, for their experience convinced them that a great success might be made of the venture, but Dumas wanted no partners. To Villemessant he wrote: "My dearest comrade, what you and that heart of gold, Millaud, have proposed is admirable, and I have no doubt would succeed. But the dream of my whole life has been to have a journal of my own, entirely my own. This object I have now attained, and I calculate that the very least it can bring me in will be a million a year. I have not yet withdrawn a *sou* from the receipts for my articles, a sum which at forty *sous* the line, by this time represents two hundred thousand francs, earned since starting the paper, a sum which I shall leave to increase quietly in stock, so that in a month or so I can have four or five hundred thousand francs at once. Under these circumstances you will see that I am not in need of money or of a manager. *Le Mousquetaire* is a gold-mine, and I mean to work it all myself. Au revoir, my dear friends, I grieve that I have only two hands with which to squeeze your four."

This impossible arithmetic must have made an experienced business man like Millaud smile. In point of fact *Le Mousquetaire* was not doing so well. True enough, by the end of two months the circulation had been boosted to ten thousand, four thousand of it from regular subscribers, but this seems to have been the peak. After that a decline set in. Dumas was nevertheless offering uncommonly good fare. *Mes Mémoires* ran serially throughout the first twelve months, and the greater part of the *causeries* and special articles were excellent. There was life and spirit in the magazine. Dumas, intent on procuring the best, constantly canvassed his friends, and though many of these friends, as forgetful of promises as Dumas himself, failed to fulfil their obligations, the general tone of *Le Mousquetaire* during its first season was admirable.

Heinrich Heine, from his sick bed in the rue d'Amsterdam, eagerly awaited each number. Lamartine, from his retreat at Saint-Point,

wrote: "I have opinions on things human but not on *miracles;* you are superhuman. The world has sought perpetual motion; you have done better—you have created perpetual amazement. Farewell; may you live,—that is, may you write! I am here to read." And from Jersey, his island of exile, the Sun-God wrote: "Dear Dumas, I read your journal. You restore to us Voltaire. Last consolation for dumb down-trodden France. *Vale et me ama.* Victor Hugo."

It was not from want of contributors and enthusiastic friends, then, that *Le Mousquetaire* suffered, but rather from the congenital recklessness and disorderliness of its editor and proprietor. Dumas could labor for extended periods with unsubdued fury, but he could not systematize expenditures, build up a capital and plan ahead. He expected instant results from instant labors. His ideal was the sudden *coup.* Money flowed into the Maison d'Or during its first year, but it vanished as rapidly as it appeared. To Dumas a cash-box was a convenient place from which money might be extracted for the pleasures of life, not a locked coffer wherein to deposit one's profits. He was as romantic in business as he was in literature. Because of this lack of calculation in financial matters the moneys induced by the seductive columns of *Le Mousquetaire* dissipated like frail morning mists. Even the proceeds from the four plays produced during 1854 were squandered with a magnificent disregard of any bourgeoise cautiousness. These productions were: *Romulus,* a one-act comedy Dumas had written in an inn at Mélun in 1851 and which was produced at the Théâtre-Français on the thirteenth of January; *La Jeunesse de Louis XIV,* a comedy in five acts which the Théâtre-Français had accepted but would not play and which, therefore, had its première in the Théâtre du Vaudeville, Brussels, on the twentieth of January; *Le Marbrier,* a drama in three acts which was presented at the Théâtre du Vaudeville, Paris, on the twenty-second of May; and *La Conscience,* a five-act drama which had its first presentation at the Odéon on the fourth of November. Perhaps the proceeds from these plays went toward debts remaining from the wreck of the Théâtre-Historique. At any rate, there was no money to show for all this activity. So the Jew was always at the portal of the Maison d'Or, the young editors waited in vain for their salaries, but remained never-

theless because the editorial office was such an amusing madhouse, and the contributors begged ceaselessly for their overdue payments.

## III

The changing world began to impress itself on Dumas. He realized that Paris, shouting about victories in the Crimea and the fall of Sebastopol, humming with preparations for the Exposition Universelle, raising arches for the impending visit of Victoria of England, announcing that Nicholas of Russia was dead and that the baleful shadow of the Slav had been lifted from Europe, was in process of transformation from the dark, sprawling metropolis of Romantic days into an international capital of broad boulevards. The realization did not depress him but it troubled him. It made him suspect his own age. Perhaps he was growing old, after all. Had he not overheard remarks about the growing greyness of his bushy hair and the lamentable enlargement of his girth? Even his friends were growing old and dying. Late in January, 1855, he had been disturbed by the news that Gérard de Nerval, *"le bon Gérard"* with whom he had wandered through Germany, had committed suicide. And in midsummer he had followed the body of Delphine Gay, the wife of Émile de Girardin, to the cemetery. He no longer saw Alfred de Vigny. Auguste Maquet was estranged and meditating a lawsuit against him. Victor Hugo had just been expelled from Jersey and had settled on the Isle of Guernsey. Émile Deschamps was old and feeble. The specter of death gazed out of the worn face of Alfred de Musset. Michelet was dreaming of the past in Italy. There were new faces everywhere. But if all these sad changes troubled his mind at times, yet he could jauntily assert himself in this new milieu. What did it matter whether it was the Paris of Louis XVIII, Charles X, Louis-Philippe or Napoleon III? The scene changed but he was the same, eternally gusty, eternally boisterous, eternally entertaining. The great days of the *feuilleton* may have gone and an obnoxiously analytical note may have crept into the literature of the Empire but he was still the wise *vulgarisateur,* the ever-flowing cornucopia of stories and *causeries,* and as long as the bourgeoisie existed he would possess his audience. So he continued with young Paul Bocage to spin out the huge shapeless

fabric of *Les Mohicans de Paris,* to pen his *causeries,* to enliven his columns with attacks on the yellow-faced Buloz, to advocate various philanthropies, to agitate for a monument on the grave of Balzac, and to take the pale and sweet Isabel Constant to the races.

Sometimes he admitted his loneliness to his old friend Delacroix, complaining to the sympathetic painter that he no longer saw Alexandre *fils* who was busy with his own triumphs (*Le Demi-Monde* was running successfully at the Gymnase) and that his daughter, Marie-Alexandre, now a tall dark girl of twenty-four, paid very little attention to him, although she did appear occasionally at 77, rue d'Amsterdam, where he now resided. Another lonely man, the unfortunate Heinrich Heine, did desire to see Dumas. He wrote: "But why do you not come to see me, my dear Dumas? I understand that you live at present in the same rue d'Amsterdam from whence I packed off some time ago to settle in the Champs Elysées, 4 Avenue Matignon, where you may find me at any hour. It is not far from your house and your cabriolet can bring you here in five minutes. Shame upon you! While you, young man, delay coming an old fellow of seventy-five, who lives in the Marais and who obstinately makes all his journeys on foot, our illustrious *doyen* Béranger, came to see me the other day in spite of the bad weather. I had not seen Béranger for twenty-five years but I found him as alert as a Parisian *gamin.* A lady, whose name you know and who was present during this visit from Béranger, marvelled at his excellent appearance, and, when we told her that he was seventy-five years old, refused absolutely to believe it and insisted that he could be no more than sixty. The response that the *chansonnier* made her diverted me for the whole day; for with a sad and sly expression and lingering sweetly on his words he said, 'You fool yourself and if you will permit me to give you proof I will convince you that you are wrong and I am actually my seventy-five years.' What a venerable mischievous child!" Dumas went to see Heine and the dying poet talked brilliantly from the bed of his affliction. He went to the Princesse Mathilde's *salons,* and presented her with a copy of *Les Châtiments.* Sometimes he might be found seated on the terrace before Tortoni's, discussing life and letters with Émile de Girardin and Gautier and Nestor Roqueplan. But there were periods when he disappeared for days at a time. Where was

he? Seated in his third floor office scribbling tales or essays? Or meditating new ways of circumventing the growing coldness of Louis-Napoleon's Paris? Once he traveled to Brussels and descended from the coach before 73, Boulevard Waterloo, his old residence of exile which he had retained, and attempted to enter the house; but he discovered that it had been re-let and was occupied by a Doctor Brayer. He commenced suit against the landlord but desisted when he learned that he had never rented from the actual proprietor. Consigning Belgium, Brussels and all the judges to the devil he returned to Paris. Dumas's restlessness began to make serious inroads on the quality of the material in *Le Mousquetaire,* and it became evident that Dumas was weary of writing prodigiously and yet having barely a *sou* to show for his application.

On the fifteenth of May, 1855, the Exposition Universelle was formally opened, and on the eighteenth of August, in the early evening, Queen Victoria of England, returning the visit of Napoléon III, rode through the newly opened Boulevard de Strasbourg on her way to Saint-Cloud. Although the lateness of this august arrival had somewhat dampened their ardor, more than eight hundred thousand people, many from the nearby towns, crowded the streets and cheered the Queen as the carriage passed in murky light beneath the triumphal arch and by the decorated house-fronts. In 1520 Henry VIII had met François Ier on the famous Field of the Cloth of Gold between Guines and Ardres; in 1688 the proscribed James II had sought asylum at Saint-Germain; in 1843 this same Victoria had shaken the hand of Louis-Philippe at the Château d'Eu; but this visit was of even more momentous circumstances. It marked the cementing of a lasting friendship between two great nations. Waterloo was forgotten. Thereafter Paris was a playground for Englishmen; signs reading *"Ici on parle anglais"* appeared in shop windows; provision was made for the entertainment of foreign visitors; and a subtle change manifested itself in the volatile city. Plays, *bals* and illuminations entertained the English Queen during her week or so in France, and Paris took on the semblance of a huge carnival. Dumas strode through all this exhibiting his customary delight in colorful movement and jovial excitement. When he heard that the Queen had indicated a desire to view a special

performance of *Les Demoiselles de Saint Cyr* he received the news with a naïve display of vanity. "You ought to be pleased," a friend, meeting him in the Chaussée d'Antin, remarked. "Not only did the Queen ask to see your play, which she had already seen in London, but she enjoyed it even better the second time." "It is like its author," remarked Dumas, "the more one knows him the more one loves him. But I know what would have amused her still more than seeing my play—to see me also! Honestly, it would have amused me, too!" "Why don't you ask for an audience?" inquired the impressed friend. "I am certain that it would be granted." "Well, I did think of it," replied Dumas. "A woman as remarkable as she is, who will probably remain the first woman of the century, ought to have met the greatest man in France! It is a pity, for she will go away without having seen the best sight in France—Alexandre, King of the world of Romance—" and then, remembering the famous chemist whom everybody called Dumas *le savant,* he added "Dumas the Ignorant!" With a roar of laughter he proceeded down the Chaussée d'Antin.

His restlessness persisted and neither triumphs in Paris nor the necessity of applying himself to intensive labors if he were to extricate himself from debt could keep him at his desk. Books appeared, in 1855, *La Dernière Année de Marie Dorval, Le Page du Duc de Savoie,* and the first portion of *Salvator,* a sequel to *Les Mohicans de Paris;* in 1856, *Les Grands Hommes en Robe de Chambre; Richelieu,* and *Madame du Deffand;* in 1857, *Le Meneur de Loups, Les Compagnons de Jehu,* which had been serialized in *Le Journal pour tous, Le Lièvre de mon Grand-Père,* a story by the Comte de Cherville which Dumas touched up, *César* and *Les Grands Hommes en Robe de Chambre.* But between their publications he disappeared, turning up in Marseilles or, as in 1856, making a trip to Chalons-sur-Marne, Sainte-Menehould and Varennes for documents and topographical knowledge of the flight of Louis XVI, or again, as in 1857, visiting England. Not even his plays could hold him in Paris. In 1856 three had been produced: *L'Orestie,* which opened at the Porte-Saint-Martin on January fifth; *La Tour Saint-Jacques la Boucherie,* played at the Théâtre Impérial du Cirque on November fifteenth; and *Le Verrou de la Reine,* presented at the Gymnase on December fifteenth. None of

these plays is worth considering, nor is *L'Invitation à la Valse,* the charming but inconsequential bit which the Gymnase presented on August 3, 1857. These books and plays were hastily conceived and not too much care was taken to maintain even a respectable level of excellence. What was happening to this prodigious worker who had returned from Brussels so certain of himself and sanguine for the future? What had four busy years in the Paris of Louis-Napoleon taught him? It is easy to reply to the first question but more difficult to answer the second. What had obviously happened to Dumas was a double shift in values that affected his fortunes and his prestige. The first shift was in himself, and it was betrayed in the exhaustion of his vast fertility. He who had depended so much upon his collaborators and research workers for a decade or more could produce by himself nothing but the repetition of a personality that had become exceedingly familiar to Paris and therefore stale. His agreeable qualities were potent enough to newcomers, but he had taken on the semblance of an old story to the populace that had grown up with him. They had had their Dumas with them for nearly thirty years and in all of that time he had been the same, undisciplined, faulty, full of high and colorful arcs into the Romantic skies, and swift drops into the superficial flatnesses of journalism. In the 1850s there were more flatnesses than colored arcs. Dumas had emptied himself of his surprises, and his audiences, which had traveled in Time beyond even the best of those surprises, were a bit contemptuous, a bit too sophisticated, a bit too immersed in the new spirit of things. It was this changed taste of the public that made up the second shift in the fortunes of Dumas. A new generation of writers was asserting itself and Dumas was badly equipped to challenge comparison with it. From the literary viewpoint he was an untidy but amusing old man striving to run with the youngsters. The youngsters did not run. That was the gait of the outmoded Romantics. They traveled at a slower pace, gazing about them with sharp analytical eyes. If *Les Trois Mousquetaires* was *the* book of 1844, then *Madame Bovary* was *the* book of 1857. Paris had become sophisticated. The cape-and-sword era in fiction had given place to the boudoir-and-drawing-room era. It was on the very day of the *Coup d'État* that the first novel of the Goncourt brothers appeared, and in 1855 they were writing

in their journal: "Put into a novel a chapter on the feminine eye and glance, a chapter composed of long and serious observations." These brothers who desired to kill all adventure in the novel, and Flaubert, Zola, Renan and Taine were the manifestations of the shift in the Time-Spirit that was so disastrous to Dumas.

On February 7, 1857, his strongest link with Paris snapped. *Le Mousquetaire* ceased to exist. It had been a sad affair during its last year but its failure was still sadder. It had started so auspiciously and the expectations of Dumas concerning it had been so grandiose. Now where was that half-million of francs that was to be dredged from this gold mine? A strange silence fell on the courtyard of the Maison d'Or and M. Alexandri no longer ran to his window in expectation of seeing somebody slaughtered on the cobbles. The long-haired poets and gesticulating *fantaisistes* departed. Well, it could not be helped. Dumas discoursed as extravagantly as ever, but moments of depression settled upon him with increasing regularity. He announced that he would found another journal and write it all himself. And, then again, he would go away and see those portions of the great world that he had dreamed about but never explored. He became a bird of passage, constantly flying from Paris and then returning to plan new flights. A silence would fall over his usual haunts; voices would murmur, "What's become of Dumas?" and then around the corner he would come, rotund, smiling, full of strange schemes and laughable stories. Early in April he appeared in London, acting as special correspondent for *La Presse* during the general elections. A funny country! He snuffed the foggy air and laughed. He gazed at the masked visages of the reticent Englishmen and laughed again. There was too much fog in their throats for conversation. Even the papers made ridiculous mistakes about distinguished visitors. To the *Times* he wrote: "As the *Times* is considered to be the best informed journal in Europe, and as I am anxious that it should continue to deserve its reputation, allow me to correct two errors into which you have fallen as regards me. (1) I am not M. Dumas *fils,* but M. Dumas *père*; (2) I do not write for *La Presse* 'by the line' but for my own pleasure." It was not that he was jealous of his son's reputation but he was tired of being reminded that Dumas *fils* was more *au courant* with the

Time-Spirit than he. He loved young Alexandre but, after all, he was himself and not his son, even though that son had stated: "My father is a great child born when I was very young." If the Englishmen would only get the fog out of their eyes they might see better. The English Sunday appalled him. "On Sunday everything is forbidden in London; when I say London, I say England; and when I say England, I say the English possessions. At Southampton a barber was fined twenty-five hundred francs for having shaved a man and on Guernsey an innkeeper was fined a hundred francs for selling a noggin of gin. In London, after having worked six days one does not rest on the seventh, *on s'ennuie!* Sunday in London gives one an idea of what the Kingdom of the Sleeping Beauty was like before the Princess was awakened." It was the usual Continental amazement at the Anglo-Saxon's strict observance of the Sabbath. Dumas passed the doleful day in his hotel composing *L'Invitation à la Valse.* Later in the spring, in May, he returned to England, this time with Alexandre *fils,* to see the Derby run off on Epsom Downs. He arrived on Monday in order to escape the deadly English Sunday and returned to Paris on Saturday for the same reason. He put up at the London Coffee House, Ludgate Hill. The London of Dickens, unclean, sprawling, grimily picturesque, was all about him but his peregrinations seem to have been limited. He visited the wax-works of Madame Tussaud and gaped delightedly at the countless souvenirs of the French Revolution. There was Marat's bath-tub, for example. The fact that there was another one in Paris did not disturb his pleasure. For an hour he strolled along the gravel paths of Hyde Park. "In Hyde Park," he noted, "you find the finest horses and also the prettiest women in London, and therefore in the whole world. But to do the Englishman justice, his first glance is for the horse, and, one might almost add, his first desire." Dumas barely noticed the horses, but he paid assiduous attention to the charming women. He saw some pretty girls in Rotten Row (*le chemin pourri,* as he called it), and imagined that he had realized in a flash the native quality of the heroines of Shakespeare. These graceful blonde creatures were, to him, the very doubles of Rosalind and Beatrice. His Gallic ebullience urged him into conversation with some of the Englishmen he met and he was amazed at their reluctant answers. "An Englishman,

astonished at your question, says 'Ho!'; if he is very much astonished he says, 'Ho! Ho!'; but, however astonished he is, he never makes any answer."

Derby Day arrived and Dumas, the guest of a Mr. Young, traveled to Epsom Downs in true English fashion, in a coach and four with postillions, braying horns, and hampers crammed with food and liquors. Swaying along the country road he went in an inextricable crowd of four-in-hands, mail-coaches, broughams, landaus, phaetons, buggies, cabs, donkey-chaises and hansoms. The names of these conveyances delighted him. The heat, the pushing mobs of cockneys, the bawling gypsies, the dust, the dirt, the quarrels, the loud-mouthed bettors, the peep-shows and the games of chance did not lessen his enjoyment in the spectacle, although he did note a trifle wryly: "Derby Day is the carnival of London which has no carnival." On the Downs he decided: "A gallop is the regulation pace on Derby Day; everything goes at a gallop—even the donkeys." Pushed hither and thither by the conglomeration of excited folk, dodging dog-carts (which he called *voitures des chiens*), avoiding itinerant merchants of unappetizing refreshments and heady liquors, he received his first complete immersion in English life, his bath of a foreign humanity. It was an experience that he seemed to enjoy more for its curious facets than for any pleasures of the senses, and though he spoke warmly of his English friends, we may suspect that he was very glad that he was a Frenchman going back to France where the lively populace took a more immediate pleasure in pleasures. The pilgrimage to the Derby accomplished—Blink-Bonny won—Dumas called the race-horse *Joli-Clignoteur*—the Crystal Palace investigated, Cremorne Gardens visited and the Great Eastern admired, Dumas returned to Paris. He had arrived at certain convictions about the English. "The English, the least artistic and most industrial (I say 'industrial' and not 'industrious') of peoples, have almost achieved art by force of industry." "The English think that the bigger a thing is, the greater it is." "The Englishman generally has the spleen in November. You may fancy that that is because of the fog, which commences in November and doesn't go away until May. Not at all! They have the spleen because they have been deprived of the fog for four months. You may ask me what the English make their

fogs of? Of coal, I suppose, but that is a detail. It was not the good God who made the fog, it was the English!"

Back in Paris, Dumas put into execution his threat to found another periodical. He established *Monte Cristo,* a publication which, he declared, would be purely his own mouth-piece. The first issue appeared in May. It was a weekly instead of a daily, and while it achieved a fair audience it never reached the circulation *Le Mousquetaire* had commanded during the first few months of its existence. *Monte Cristo* was primarily a *causerie* sheet. It did not matter what the subject might be, English life, hunting elephants, phrenology, art, macaroni *à l'Italienne;* he would attack it with gusto. Naturally *Monte Cristo* was plentifully besprinkled with the first person singular. Politics he left severely alone. What Napoleon III was doing or why he was doing it might be matters of burning moment in the privacy of one's chamber but they were not the proper subjects for an intimate chatter-sheet. Dumas was beginning to indulge in prudence, a quality he had scorned most of his life. Too many periodicals had been suppressed by "the Dutchman" or were being censored by politicians whose object was the continued consolidation of the Empire. Yet Dumas could show his indignation fearlessly enough when it seemed incumbent so to do for honor's sake. There was, for instance, his quarrel with Mademoiselle Augustine Brohan. She had been a good friend to Dumas; he had brought the petite Isabel Constant to her house; her acting—and she was one of the outstanding comediennes of her time—had done much to maintain the popularity of some of the writer's plays. Yet when she attacked the political conduct of Victor Hugo in *Le Figaro* the rage of Dumas knew no bounds. Hugo was a defenceless exile, fair game for all the cowardly little ink-spatterers in Paris; and to Dumas it seemed shameful that the Sun-God's manifest sincerity should be impeached. Mademoiselle Brohan had written under the nom-de-plume of Suzanne, but Dumas quickly discovered the author and despatched a letter to the Théâtre-Français demanding that the actress be denied the privilege of appearing in any of his dramas in the future. He was depriving himself of a charming exponent of some of his best rôles but he did not care. Hugo and he had been brother-musketeers of the Romantic days and the ancient motto still held firm: one for all and all for one.

The shadow of Auguste Maquet hovered over Dumas during this period. What had the mustachioed ex-collaborator been doing all this time? Many things. He had written a number of books without assistance, planned them and composed them entirely on his own, and while they had not been astounding neither had they been bad. They were Dumas without the tang. During 1853 and 1854 *La Belle Gabrielle* had appeared. In 1855 he gave *Le Comte de Lavernie* to a nôt too eager public; and *La Maison de Baigneur* was issued during 1856. It was during this year that Maquet, giving up all hope of remuneration for past services from Dumas, resorted to the courts. The famous document of 1848 in which he had assigned all his rights to Dumas for the lump sum of 145,200 francs payable in monthly instalments over a period of eleven years he claimed was broken, and he applied to the courts for a revocation of this agreement, half the author's rights, and his name on eighteen novels. Why had he done this? For several reasons. He had witnessed his bright dream of a fortune dissipated by the collapse of the Théâtre-Historique, the bankruptcy of Dumas, the *Coup d'État,* and the flight of Dumas to Brussels. Still Maquet waited patiently. The spell of Dumas was on him. Not even the insidious whispers of the anti-Dumas clique could shake him. But time passed; *Le Mousquetaire* blossomed, flourished, dwindled and died; it became apparent to the younger man that Dumas (circumvented by fate as much as his own extravagance) would never make those long overdue payments. It became no longer a question of friendship but a matter of justice. Then too, the irritation occasioned by constantly seeing those eighteen books with the solitary name of Dumas upon their covers had its effect. After all *he* had written important portions of them and he had slaved in the galleys of various bibliothèques to dredge out of forgotten tomes the historical color and incidents for these books. He forgot that he was a secondary figure, a secretary who moved at the direction of the master and who was like a mesmerized mind animated and guided by the personality of Dumas. It did not occur to him that while *Le Belle Gabrielle* was good, it was at its best only the shadow of the full-bodied novels Dumas had conceived and he had executed with him. Neither did he remember that he had ventured into this association open-eyed, that there had never been any

question of full partnership in the collaborations, and that he had burst into tears of gratitude that memorable evening in his box at the Ambigu when, much to his surprise, he had been announced as collaborator with Dumas of *Les Mousquetaires*. He had not expected it for there had never been such an agreement. He forgot all these things and remembered only his years of hard labor and the meagerness of his financial reward for them. It was as an enemy, therefore, that he attacked Dumas in the courts.

It was painful to observe these two old friends who between them had established the cape-and-sword romance in French literature, so ranged against each other. Dumas continued smiling and friendly and boasted that he bore no hard feelings toward Maquet. "Why should he?" thought Maquet bitterly. "He has had all the best of it. He had the money and spent it. He still has the fame." There was some moral justice in Maquet's bitterness but no legal rights and the courts recognized this in 1858 when they denied his demands but acknowledged his collaboration and awarded him the twenty-five per cent statutory dividend. Maquet retired angrily from the unequal contest. Dumas was a scoundrel. He was a treacherous old negro. The victim of these epithets shrugged his shoulders ruefully. What could he do? He lamented the estrangement of Maquet but he could not pay even the twenty-five per cent dividend. One needed money to make payments and the francs that flowed into the coffers of *Monte Cristo* flowed out as swiftly as they had during the days of *Le Mousquetaire*. No, he could do nothing. Poor Maquet. He was still fond of him. Maquet was comparatively young—he was only forty-five—and might do great things in the future. But for a reason not hard to find, he never did anything. He had lost the animating influence that had sustained him through so much labor. The secret was lost. Dumas saw him march furiously out of his life and sighed to think of the many estrangements there were in this changing world. But he did not sigh for any length of time. There were too many things to do. A journey to Marseilles, and the production of *Les Gardes Forestiers* at the Grand-Théâtre there on March 23, 1858. The premiére of *L'Honneur est satisfait* at the Gymnase in Paris on June 19. And books, three of them: *Le Capitaine Richard, Black,* and *L'Horoscope*.

The seasons passed swiftly to these efforts and to the concoction of countless causeries. There were splendors and parades in Paris. The *salons* intrigued Dumas; the best restaurants lured him; a few old friends remained with whom he might discourse about the past. But the mark of time was upon him. It was evident in his restlessness, in the growing suspicion that the capital had relegated him to a lesser place, in the faltering of his dramatic enterprises and the increasing difficulties of creating successful novels. The swift life of Paris increased and Dumas could hardly keep pace with it. He began to think again of far-away places. "Posterity," he announced, "commences at the frontier." He might have said, "The old order changeth. . . ."

# CHAPTER SIX

## THE SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

### I

Daniel Douglas Home, a young Scotchman of feminine appearance, amazed and perturbed Paris during the winter of 1858. He was in league with powers beyond the grave and at his bidding these invisible spirits appeared and rapped tables, lifted chairs and shook windows in their frames. Shuddering duchesses and uneasy counts witnessed these manifestations with a fearful pleasure. It was a new thrill for the enervated society of the Second Empire, a *frisson* calculated to arouse lethargic natures soporiferous from easy luxuries. Home, the spirit medium, passed like a new Cagliostro through the salons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. It was natural that Dumas should seek out this surprising phenomenon, for all his life he had believed implicitly in the magic of somnambulism, in animal magnetism and in chiromancy. No Haitian negro dancing before his Voodoo altar was more superstitious than Dumas. Home, to Dumas, therefore, was an authentically inspired adept in communicating with the unseen world. The meeting was arranged by mutual friends and an intimacy sprang up between the writer and the medium. Dumas, wide-eyed and open-mouthed, would gaze at the table-turning, and the Scotchman would accept gracefully the homage implicit in the older man's silence. They visited cafés together, the theaters and the homes of mutual friends. One day Home took his French companion to the Hôtel des Trois Empereurs in the Place du Palais-Royal where the Russian Comte Kouchelef, his wife and entourage were staying. The Comte Kouchelef was a Cossack of the Zaparog tribe beyond the cataracts of the Dnieper. His conversation was a stream of thrilling tales of the fierce life of the hard riders of the steppes, and Dumas,

attuned always to the hoofbeats of romance, became a frequent visitor to the Trois Empereurs. Home's visits were for another purpose. It was his desire to marry the sister of the Comtesse Kouchelef. Dumas was present when the prospective wedding was announced. It would take place in St. Petersburg. St. Petersburg! The fortress of Peter and Paul! The Nevsky Prospect! The city of Ivan! And Russia! Moscow! The Kremlin! The city that Napoleon had destroyed! Nijni-Novgorod! Kasan! Astrakhan! Sebastopol! The slow waves of the Volga! The eyes of Dumas glistened. Comte Kouchelef noticed this and smiled. A few days after the announcement of the betrothal had been made public he approached Dumas and said: "We leave for Russia in five days and we are going to take you with us." Dumas bounded from his chair. "Impossible!" he gasped. They convinced him that it was not impossible. He asked for two days in which to make up his mind. They gave him ten minutes. Five days later he was on the Cologne express with his face turned toward the Slav city of Peter.

As the train sped across France Dumas's spirits lifted in the exultation of the wanderer. He had remained sedentary too long; he was a nomad, a bird of travel, an explorer of the world and its wonders; it was no matter that he had left so many unfinished things behind him. Providence would take care of them. Or Louis-Napoleon. He did not care which. As for his journal, *Monte Cristo,* he had left that in charge of a deputy-editor and had vaguely promised to forward travel *causeries.* At Cologne they changed to the Berlin train, and at Berlin they went to the Hôtel de Rome where there were not enough beds to accommodate them. Dumas slept in the bathtub. From Berlin they went on to Stettin and there they boarded a steamer, *Le Wladimir,* for St. Petersburg. Dumas was joyous and amusing. One of his fellow passengers was Prince Troubetzkoi who, won over by the bubbling gusto of the writer, suggested that Dumas come to hunt wolves with him on his estate, and Dumas, protesting that chasing bears would be more fun, accepted the invitation. The towers of St. Petersburg rose before the party and Dumas was taken to the Villa Bezborodko, the splendid residence of the Comte Kouchelef which was at some distance from the city but from which a magnificent view of the wide sweep of the Neva might be seen. Days passed

in exploration of St. Petersburg with the Russian novelist, Gregorovitch, as guide. It was all admirable, the strange architecture, the monuments, the bridges, the churches, the clear moon of June above the city, and the soft air; yet something in the Russian mode of living disturbed Dumas. Perhaps it was occasioned by his visit to the great prison where the exiles for Siberia were herded.

The marriage of Home and the sister of the Comtesse Kouchelef took place in an elaborate setting glittering with uniforms, and Dumas, expansive and impressive with half a dozen decorations draped across his wide bosom, acted as best man. It was one of the few times that he took the second lead in any of the dramas of his life. But even here, though he was but a subsidiary in an episode that was of prime importance to Home, the adulation that greeted him on all sides pleased his vanity. Six weeks among the Slav nobility passed and Dumas bethought himself of his determination to see the rest of the strange country, as much of it as he could see within the time at his disposal. He was curious and he needed impressions for his *causeries*. He bade farewell to the hospitable Comte Kouchelef and departed on a boat along the Neva to Schlusselberg. He would see Finland. Lake Ladoga delighted him, but a trip to the Island of Konivetz, where an ancient religious establishment was situated, irritated him because all that he could get for dinner was tea, bread and salted fish. He explored the islands in Lake Ladoga and then returned to St. Petersburg where he took a final farewell of Comte Kouchelef and commended Home to the spirits. Moscow called to him, for Jenny Falcon was there. So, too, was the Comte Narychkine, one of the great *boyars* of the Russian Empire. Dumas remained for a month as a welcome guest in the Comte's residence in Petrovsky Park. He saw the Kremlin by moonlight, made a pilgrimage to the battlefields of Moskova, bowed his head before the monument in the foreign cemetery which bore the inscription: *"Français morts—pendant et après l'occupation,"* and then departed for Nijni-Novgorod to revel in the famous fair. Accompanied by a guide attached to him by the rector of the University of Moscow he sailed down the sad and uniform river of the Volga, stopping at night in strange towns and reaching Nijni-Novgorod on the third day. Here he was pleasantly surprised to meet the Comte and Comtesse Aunenkof who were the Alexis and Pauline

of that *Le Maître d'Armes* which Dumas had written some years before from the notes of Grisier. It was amusing, too, to discover on sale in the streets of the town handkerchiefs printed in colors with scenes from the book. The brightly colored fair with its shouting hucksters, its strange music and its wild dances held him for three days and then Dumas started forth again on the Volga. At Kasan he mingled with the Tartars and was embarrassed by the gifts showered upon him. When he left for Astrakhan he took with him six extra bags of presents which he had found it impossible to refuse. Two days were agreeably passed in Saratov and on the twenty-sixth of October he sailed into the port of Astrakhan and the Caspian Sea was before him.

Astrakhan was like an Arabian Nights dream. Strange foods and bizarre people and Kalmuck madness were apparent on all sides. Dumas was entertained by Prince Toumaine, rubbed noses with him in greeting, saw a vast herd of ten thousand wild horses driven into the Volga and swimming across that river, their eyes burning, their unkempt manes flung back. He wrote verses in the album of the Princess and witnessed a camel race. He even wrestled with the Prince and threw him after a five-minute struggle, but it is to be suspected that the courtesy of the Kalmuck had something to do with this easy victory. While he was in Astrakhan the traveler conceived the idea of pushing on to the frontiers of Russia and Asia. He would go to Kislar but to do that he would have to cross an enormous and solitary steppe, a desert of sand at least a hundred leagues long. There were perils attached to such a journey, for the wilderness swarmed with Kalmuck vagabonds and Tartar nomads; but once having set his heart on the venture Dumas disregarded the danger. He started off in a tarantasse, a peculiar Kalmuck conveyance, armed with a falcon presented to him by Prince Toumaine and with his Spanish decoration flaming on the bosom of his Russian military coat. The armed Cossacks who encountered him saw the gleaming medals and mistook him for a French general. Dumas accepted the misconception with a smile, returned the sharp salutes with military precision, and proceeded safely to Kislar, a town which did not appeal to him greatly, and from there to Tiflis, the capital of Georgia. Tiflis charmed him. It smacked of the dear, dirty East. He ate *schislik*,

mutton prepared in a local fashion, and liked it enormously. He was entertained by Baron Finot, by Prince Bariatinski, by the viceroy of Caucasia, all of whom treated him as a great celebrity. The result was that he remained six weeks in the Georgian capital and wrote two short books, *Sultanetta* and *La Boule de Neige,* as well as a number of postponed *causeries* for *Monte Cristo.* Then he was off for Poti where he unluckily missed the boat for Trebizond and was forced to stay for several days in a dirty and outrageously expensive inn. He met Vasili during his residence here. Vasili was an intelligent Georgian boy, so intelligent that Dumas immediately took him into his service. It was cold in Poti and the writer's fingers grew numb as he sat in his chilly room at the small inn and strove to set down his impressions of the Caucasus for the impatient Parisian readers of his neglected periodical. And in the yard beneath his room a nocturnal saturnalia of squealing pigs disturbed him. Dumas could see them through the uneven flooring, skinny, irascible, amorous swine. He finally drove them away by pouring boiling water through the cracks in the floor. When the steamer *Grand Duc Constantin* which was to carry him to Trebizond finally arrived it was an intensely relieved author who hurried on board. At Trebizond—name redolent of Eastern tales—he boarded the packet-boat *Sully* which brought him to Marseilles by way of Constantinople. The minarets above the Golden Horn flashed briefly before him; the familiar blue waters of the Mediterranean charmed him; and the bustle along the Cannebière in Marseilles delighted him. He would eat bouillebaisse, exchange tales with Méry and then plunge once again into the gay life of Paris.

*Salvator,* the long continuation of *Les Mohicans de Paris,* had been halted abruptly when Dumas departed so suddenly for Russia; now upon his return to Paris he picked up the loose threads of this huge, shapeless *feuilleton* and proceeded with it to the gratification of his readers who disapproved of these suspensions. Once again he was striding along the beloved boulevards, breathing the clear air of the city by the Seine and listening to the trumpets on the Champs de Mars. Doors seemed to open of their own accord when his step approached; hands were extended and voices vibrated with welcome.

It was always this way. Paris never fully appreciated her playboy until he returned from foreign lands after a prolonged absence. She experienced anew the charm of Dumas and paid willing tribute to it until the charmer exasperated her by some ridiculous divagation, some notorious affair with an actress or some law suit over contract defalcations. This time Dumas enjoyed a renewal of the popularity he had in the middle forties. He was Dumas *père* now, for the many successes of his son had given a double significance to the name. At this time Alexandre *fils* seemed to be following in the footsteps of his father; he was deeply engulfed in a liaison with Madame Narischkine whom he had met at Baden, a liason that resulted the next year, 1860, in the birth of a daughter, Colette. Unlike his father, however, he married the mother of this illegitimate child. At the same time Alexandre *fils* was putting the finishing touches to a new play, *Un Père Prodigue,* in which the principal character would seem to be modeled after his creator. Therefore he saw little of Dumas and would continue to see little of him until the last few years of his father's life. Parent and child had reached a division of ways, and while the parent continued his disorderly, amoral, Bohemian existence, the son tended more and more toward a regulated and respectable observance of life. Dumas at this time exhibited his disregard of morals by bringing his affair with Isabel Constant to a friendly termination and embarking at once upon another with a slim, boyish girl named Émilie Cordier. During this year Ida Ferrier Dumas, sometimes known as La Comtesse Davy de la Pailleterie, died at Pisa. She had faded with such finality from the life of Dumas that he could not summon a single regret.

On April 16, 1859, the first issue of *Le Caucase* appeared, a daily journal established by Dumas as a catch-all for his Russian stories, travel sketches and notes. It did not last long, however, for the unbusinesslike author ran out of material and the publisher calmly stole several chapters from Edouard Merlieux's *Les Souvenirs d'une Française, Captive de Schamyl,* and filled up the columns of the fourteenth, twentieth and twenty-first issues of the periodical with them. Merlieux waxed indignant at this pilfering and resorted to the Tribunal Correctionnel of the Seine for justice. He received it. Dumas was ordered to pay the author one hundred francs *d'amende*

and to be conjointly responsible with the publisher, Charlieu, for five hundred francs damages. *Le Caucase* incontinently disappeared. But this was no more than an unfortunate episode in a busy spring and early summer. His industrious pen did not falter for *Monte Cristo* continually required material and the publishers insisted that their contracts be observed. Five titles appeared during this year: *Ammalat Beg* and *Le Caucase,* both memorials of the Russian trip; *Le Chasseur de Sauvagine,* written from a story supplied by the inventive Comte de Cherville; *Charles le Teméraire,* an historical sketch of Charles the Bold of Burgundy; and *Les Louves de Machecoul,* a full length novel which ran serially in *Le Journal pour tous* and which dealt with the Royalist uprising in La Vendée in 1832 in favor of the Duchesse de Berry. It is probable that Dumas was assisted by some unnamed author in the writing of this book. So much work meant long and fatiguing hours bowed over a desk, but the vigor of Dumas remained undiminished and there was always time to appear in theater foyers or salons or the studios of his friends. Wherever he went he brought or created new tales, marvelous narratives even if they were not true. What did it matter whether Dumas told the truth or not? There were even skeptical listeners and readers who, remembering *Quinze Jours au Sinai,* were convinced that Dumas had never been near Russia but had secreted himself in a room and concocted the whole thing. Nevertheless, the tales and travel sketches in themselves were compact with a gaiety and color that were irresistible. Who cared whether Dumas had really killed lions or wrestled with a Kalmuck prince or been bitten by a ferocious vulture? Who cared whether Baron Munchausen really existed or not?

Dumas, after the months of absence in Russia, would seem to be settled for some time in Paris, but in reality he was already meditating another flight. The cafés bored him, the boulevards soon wearied him. His entangled finances aggravated him. The studios reeked too strongly of tobacco smoke. Memories of the minarets above the Golden Horn haunted him and he thought of all the eastern lands he had never seen. More than once in *Monte Cristo* he had broached the plan of an extended journey dear to his heart, meditated upon often, even fully planned out. What could be finer than to equip a small boat, recruit a few friends as fellow passengers, preferably

men who did not smoke, and sail into the Eastern wonders of the Mediterranean? He would put in at all the ports of Sicily and dream beneath the warm sun while Vesuvius blew thin spirals into the cloudless sky. He would lounge along the coast of Egypt where once the ships of the Carthaginians had passed, and wave a hand to the Alexandrian pharos. He would see Sparta that had produced strong men and Athens where the Acropolis crowned the violet-hued hill and Corinth where the noble ruins stood. He would sail through the Ionian Isles and pause at forgotten pagan shrines. He would pass through the Golden Horn and walk through the streets of Constantinople and meditate upon Byzantium. He would traverse the blue waves of the Bosphorus and muse upon Lord Byron at Abydos. He would even explore the ancient cities of Asia Minor and walk across the fields of Troy. He was aging and it was time to complete his explorations of the world. In another few years he would be too old to travel. There would be time enough then to settle down to a sedentary existence in Paris and fill the twilight end of Time with books and still more books. Late in the summer he went to Marseilles, laughed again with Méry over the southern chasseurs who sat in their shooting boxes waiting for birds that never came, inquired about ship-builders and ordered the construction of a small boat at Syra to be ready for him early in the new year. His friends threw up their hands in amazement. That great mad Dumas! He was about to set off again on some unreasonable exploit that would plunge him farther than ever in debt. But Dumas gave no heed to the amused expostulations of his friends.

The construction of the boat under way, Dumas returned to a fury of writing in Paris. It would be necessary to raise as much money as possible if his prospective journey was to be at all the triumph he planned. Alexandre *fils* entered his father's study one day and found him surrounded by reams of paper and laboring with a ferocity that was awe-inspiring. "How are you?" he inquired. Dumas raised an exhausted face down which perspiration trickled. "Very tired. Very tired." "Then why don't you rest?" asked the son. "I cannot." "Why not?" Dumas flung down his pen and pulled open the drawer of his desk. There were two louis there. "See," he said, "when I came to Paris in 1823 I had fifty-three francs.

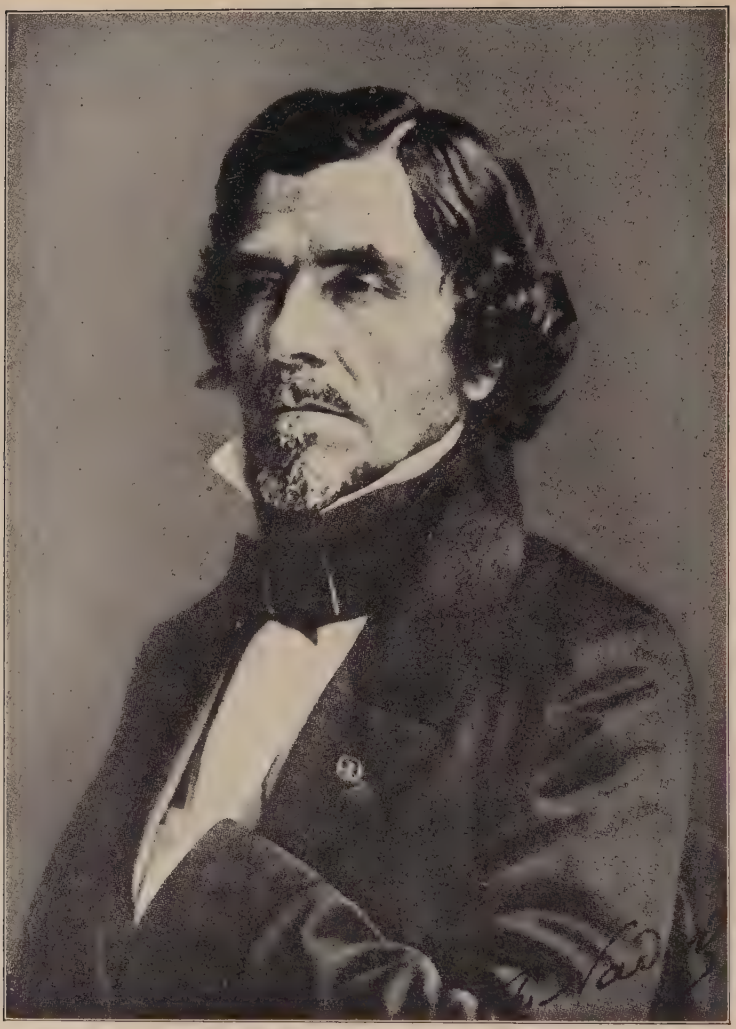
You observe that I have no more than forty now. If I mean to recover those thirteen francs that I have lost it is necessary that I labor." A roar of laughter and Dumas was immersed in his copy again. By January, 1860, he was in Marseilles overseeing the furnishings and equipment for the newly finished boat which he christened the *Emma,* undoubtedly in memory of that fair and frail Lady Hamilton who loved Nelson. Marseilles was lovely. The weather was warm whereas it was freezing in Paris, and there were great tureens of bouillebaisse to devour in the company of Méry, Émilie Cordier, who accompanied her huge idol everywhere now, Jadin and some of the actors and actresses from the Marseilles theaters. Dumas heard that Garibaldi, the fierce champion of Victor Emmanuele, was at Turin, so he traveled to the Italian city to pay his respects to the man who was fighting for freedom. Garibaldi, tall and red-bearded, with his long hair brushing the collar of his shirt and flowing upon his shoulders, greeted Dumas with affability. The Frenchman explained his profound love for freedom and his abysmal hatred of the wretched Bourbon, Francis II, who ruled at Naples. Had not that infamous King's still more infamous uncle attempted to poison General Alexandre Dumas in the prisons of Brindisi? Garibaldi enjoyed the wit and oratorical flourishes of this impetuous nomad and confided to him the memoirs of his adventurous days as a revolutionist in South America. Dumas might put them into a book and publish them in Paris. The writer shook the patriot's hand and exclaimed: "God knows when we shall meet again, but give me some little scrap of paper by which I shall be able to get to you." Garibaldi, wondering if he ever should see Dumas again, scribbled on a sheet of paper: "I commend to all my friends my illustrious friend, Alexandre Dumas.—Garibaldi."

By the end of January Dumas was back in Paris, covering more sheets of paper than ever with his swift, legible scrawl, and slapping together some hasty plays that might be expected to fill his depleted coffers. On February 4th, *Le Roman d'Elvire,* a comic opera written with his old friend Adolphe de Leuven, and set to music by Ambroise Thomas, was produced at the Opéra-Comique; and in the hands of managers were either the scripts or scenarios of three more potential productions. Time was moving rapidly and Dumas darted back and

ALEXANDRE DUMAS—THE GIANT

FROM A CARICATURE BY H. MEYER.

*The Goncourt brothers spoke of Dumas's face as resembling that of the Man in the Moon*



DELACROIX

*The famous painter was always a friend to Dumas*

forth with celerity. He must select friends for his cruise, friends who would appreciate the blue waves of the Bosphorus and the noble lines of the Acropolis. Finally he invited Paul Parfait and Edouard Lockroy, and both men accepted with alacrity an invitation to enjoy a long vacation at no expense to themselves. It was settled then. There were still a few books to give to the publishers and Dumas volleyed them from his study as though he were a quick-firing literary cannon. *La Maison de Glace,* a translation from the Russian; *Monsieur Coumbs,* a short romance of Marseilles; *Le Père Gigogne,* a volume of fairy tales for children, translated from foreign authors for the most part; *Le Père la Ruine,* a revised version of a story by the industrious Comte de Cherville; *La Route de Varennes,* an historical study of the flight of Louis XVI; two volumes of selected *Causeries* from *Monte Cristo*; *Les Mémoires d'Horace,* a fantasia on ancient Rome written as a *feuilleton* for *Le Siècle*; *Les Drames Galants: La Marquise d'Escoman,* a bit of hack biography *scandaleuse.* There! It was done. He had fifty thousand francs and he was ready to bid farewell to Paris, to tuck little Emilie Cordier under one arm, grasp Parfait and Lockroy by the coat collars and dash off to the lands and seas of history and myth. The boat was swinging at the quai, the hold was stuffed with supplies, the sea was fair, romance lay ahead. But one last gesture. He seized the ink-well into which he had dipped his pen as he dashed off his last fifteen or twenty books and despatched it to Madame Victor Hugo on the island of Guernsey. The Sun-God, uncertain whether it was a Pandora's Box with the lid off from which might fly half a dozen winged *mousquetaires* or a dried-up well, put it on his desk beside his own and observed it with some trepidation. Where was that fellow off to now? He was off to Marseilles to climb aboard the *Emma* and set sail for the Isles of Greece where burning Sappho loved and sung. And standing on the deck beside him was Émilie Cordier, dressed in a tight little midshipman's uniform which did not as yet reveal the fact that she was *enceinte.* It was late in April when the fifty-eight-year-old adventurer moved out of the port of Marseilles and watched the gloomy bulk of the Chateau d'If, where Edmond Dantès had suffered, fade behind him. The wind ruffled through the upstanding mass of crinkly hair, his large neck lifted proudly from the open

shirt collar and his small sparkling eyes shifted ahead beyond Toulon, beyond Port-Cros and Porquerolles and Hyères and Nice—where that splendid red-bearded fellow, Garibaldi had been born—to the shores of Italy. His destination was Genoa.

## II

The waves slapped merrily against the brightly painted sides of the *Emma* as she lounged by Mentone and rode parallel with the Italian coast. Parfait and Lockroy, acting as secretaries for Dumas, viewed the excursion with varying emotions. Parfait was content, but Lockroy had learned that Ernest Renan was engaged in archaeological exploration somewhere and desired to join him. Both of these men disappeared from the *Emma* before the cruise was over and little Emilie Cordier then became acting secretary to Dumas. On May 16th the low gray sea walls of the ancient city of Genoa rose before the travelers and Dumas gazed affectionately on the city to which he had come so happily several times before. As the *Emma* proceeded to her place of anchor she created a sensation, so much of a sensation that the French Admiral, Le Barbier de Tinan, on his man-of-war nearly burst with envy. Here was that fellow Dumas arriving just in time to seize all the glory for himself! He loved to rush in where neither angels nor devils dared to tiptoe and always, always he became the center of admiration, attention and laughter. The French Admiral stalked down to his cabin and poured himself a generous glass of brandy. How long would that fellow stay in the bay with his painted boat, his little midshipman of the curiously feminine appearance, his uproarious laughter, his elaborate dinner parties both on ship and on land, and his naïvely peremptory requests for all sorts of favors? No sooner had Dumas anchored in the bay than information was transmitted to him that his new friend Garibaldi had sailed from there on May fifth with a thousand men for the chaotic island of Sicily. The Italian patriot and his adventurous but tiny army of Red Shirts had landed at Marsala on the eleventh of the month. Dumas waited in a fever of unrest, dividing his time between his boat and the Hôtel de France, for news from this reckless attempt to snatch Sicily from tyrannic power. Garibaldi sud-

denly represented to him the apotheosis of liberty, the inspired condottiere who would unify this dismembered land of Italy so dominated by Bourbons and Papal tricksters. That unification was already taking place in the north, where Lombardy by the peace of Zurich had come under the crown of Victor Emmanuele, King of Sardinia and head of the House of Savoy. The excitable political propensities of Dumas suddenly conquered his dream of sailing through the Ionian Isles and the Bosphorus. Why should he moon about among the ruins when he might assist in the building of a kingdom? Had not Garibaldi left a welcoming letter for him at Genoa? News was brought to him that the battle of Calatifimi had taken place on the fifteenth and that Garibaldi was marching on Palermo. The *Emma* seemed to tug impatiently at her anchor as though the spirit of her stout master had been communicated to her. On the twenty-seventh of May Garibaldi and his Thousand entered the ancient city of Palermo to the cheers of the Sicilians who had been so aroused by the words of Mazzini. Against the will of the captain, an old French sailor named Beaugrand, the anchor of the *Emma* was hauled up, the blue waves of the Bosphorus were consigned to the devil and Dumas was off for Palermo where history was being made. In his pocket was the precious note that Garibaldi had given him in Turin. There was a mountainous sea and a fierce gale blowing as the *Emma* ran out of the bay of Genoa. After a week's tossing on the stormy waters the eighty-ton boat rode into the quiet Sicilian harbor. The detonations of seven mysterious cannon shots hastened the landing of Dumas. Did they mean combat or triumph?

The Italian liberator flung his arms about Dumas's neck and led him to the Palais-Royal. Little Émilie Cordier skipped along behind her protector. At the Palais-Royal Dumas was installed in the best apartments, those of the ex-Governor, Castelcicala, and he settled himself to watch the progress of the campaign and to write, to finish the memoirs of Garibaldi, to indite vivid letters to the Parisian press and to act as unofficial advisor to Garibaldi. The recklessness of Dumas in throwing himself unasked into positions of great responsibility was never more apparent than in this attachment to Garibaldi. At first the dictator seemed to accept Dumas at his own valuation and there were many consultations between the two men. There

was a simplicity about Garibaldi that was touching. Once he pointed to the *Emma* which could be seen riding proudly at anchor through the palace window and remarked: "If I were rich I would do like you, I would have a yacht." He had just signed a check for half a million francs of public funds, but he had no money of his own. Out of the official cash he took ten francs a day for his expenses and once when he burned a hole in his clothes he was hard put to it for a change. Dumas could not understand his wish. What was a yacht compared to a country? The intoxication of a cause had carried him away completely. He listened to the Red Shirts singing in the streets:

*Addio, mia bell' addio*
*L'armata se ne va;*
*Se non partissi anch' io*
*Sarebbe un vilta.*

It was beautiful. The clang of musket-butts on the broken cobbles, the heavy tread of soldiers, the quivering excitement in the streets, the despatches, the councils of war, the conversations with Garibaldi and his officers, with Nino Bixio and Manin and Türr, the thought of Francis II shuddering with fright in Naples, all these martial manifestations intoxicated him to such an extent that the long planned pleasure trip seemed like the slightest of dreams. This was better. This was action. Once when Garibaldi returned from some expedition out of Palermo the populace poured into the streets to greet him and Dumas appeared on his balcony waving a huge banner. He was recognized and enthusiastically applauded. "Blessed be my thirty years of struggle and toil after all!" he wrote immediately to a Paris newspaper. "If France has nothing for her poets but a crown of misery and the scepter of exile, the foreigner at least offers them the crown of laurel and the car of triumph! O, if you had been with me here on this balcony, you two whom I cherish in my heart, dear Lamartine, dear Victor Hugo, the triumph would have been for you!"

On June 20 Türr's command was ordered by Garibaldi to proceed to the center of the island by way of Caltanisetta to Catania on the eastern sea. There were about five hundred men of the original

Thousand in this detachment besides some Bourbon deserters and a dozen Sicilian gentlemen. Two obsolete cannon composed the battery. There was no ammunition, but this could be secured from the sulphur district of Caltanisetta. Dumas, who had heard of these preparations with great interest, suddenly decided to accompany the expedition. Practically all of the famous war correspondents had attached themselves to it and Dumas, who was contributing reports to the Parisian press, regarded it as imperative that he join the company. He was faced by one problem, however, the proper disposition of little Émilie Cordier. He could not leave her behind either on the *Emma* or in the Palais-Royal of Palermo for there were too many handsome young Italians wandering about and Émilie sometimes had a thoughtless acquiescent way with her. He solved the problem by taking her with him. Still dressed in her midshipman outfit she made a charming figure as she trotted along beside Dumas. The insouciant writer was admired by some of the men in the expedition and detested by others. His endless advice about every subject under the sun from the proper way of loading a gun to the wisest method of governing a province grew irksome. Such colossal vanity delighted a few, amazed more and irritated the majority. Yet he could always arouse laughter from friend and foe alike with his unending badinage. The expedition passed through uninteresting and difficult country and its progress was uneventful. There were no battles, no thrilling rescues, nothing resembling the Bastion St. Gervaise at La Rochelle, for example, and before half the island had been crossed Dumas was bored. The sullen peasants whose faces lightened when they learned that Garibaldi was not going to enforce conscription were uninteresting; the war correspondents were dull and antagonistic fellows; and the commandant paid no attention at all to the elaborately conceived campaign plans of Dumas. When one is fifty-eight years old one requires the stimulation of excitement, and steady marching is far from exciting; also a fine bed in a palace is much to be preferred to a camp couch. Dumas decided that he had seen enough of the march across Sicily. After all, Émilie was pregnant and such hardship tired her. So one fine morning Dumas bade farewell to the detachment and he and his midshipman turned back to Palermo. Perhaps Garibaldi was in need of advice.

He was not.

Dumas boarded the *Emma* and prepared to resume his interrupted journey to the isles of Greece, Abydos and all those other colorful places that had seemed so charming a few months before. But somehow the roseate hues had been dissipated from this vision. Reluctantly he turned the *Emma* toward Malta where he planned to stop before going on to Corfu, but he was tormented by scruples. Why did he not remain and see the culmination of this daring enterprise? It was true that active campaigning had fatigued him and that he was not so good a trooper as he might have been twenty years before; still were there not other ways in which he might assist the liberator? There was the question of guns and ammunitions, for instance. With a sudden determination he dismissed the dimming vision of Asia and put into a small port in Sicily, Alicata, from whence he dispatched a letter to Garibaldi. Should he not go to France and procure arms for the brave patriots of Italy? "Say yes, and I will postpone my Asian journey and make the campaign with you." In reality he had already dismissed the Asian journey from his mind. The Orient would always be there. Garibaldi's reply was gracious. He expected Dumas in person to outline his plan for procuring guns. He was "yours devotedly." The note reached Dumas at Catania to which port he had sailed after stopping at Malta for money and mail. For three days he had enjoyed the fêtes there, danced, listened to music and applauded the illuminations. Now duty beckoned and bidding farewell to the citizens of the little Sicilian town who had given him the freedom of the city ("the fourth time that I had been made a citizen of Sicily") he set sail for the oriental gulf of Milazzo and arrived in time to witness the battle of Milazzo on July 20th. Garibaldi welcomed him as fondly as ever, talked over the possibilities of gun-running and gave him a draft on the municipality of Palermo for the purchase of arms. "When you come back, Dumas," he remarked, "you ought to establish a newspaper at Palermo." "What shall I call it?" asked Dumas. Garibaldi picked up his pen and wrote, "The newspaper which my friend Dumas means to establish in Palermo is to have the good name of *The Independent,* a title that it will deserve the more as he intends not to spare me should I ever

desert my principles as a child of the people." Good simple Garibaldi!

At Palermo Dumas ran into difficulties for the authorities would not recognize the requisition for money. Garibaldi, it seemed, had neglected to add the ominous word "dictator" below his signature. After some excited gesticulations and manoeuverings on the part of Dumas the matter was straightened out by the creation of a credit account, and on the twenty-ninth of July the distinguished filibusterer departed on the Messageries steamer, *Le Pausilippe,* for Marseilles. On the way out the French boat was nearly run down by a Neapolitan vessel. A brief halt was made in the Bay of Naples where Dumas shook his fist at the palace of Francis II and uttered dark remarks concerning the imminent arrival of Garibaldi. At last the Bourbons were going to pay for attempting to murder General Alexandre Dumas. The run from Naples to Marseilles was uneventful and there Dumas passed six pleasant days in his rôle of Garibaldi's confrère. He bristled with importance, ordered guns and ammunitions, breathed fire and fury against the King of Naples to the evident distress of the French officials, and then disappeared as abruptly as he had arrived. By the thirteenth of August he was back before the sea-wall of Naples, still a passenger on *Le Pausilippe,* with his mission accomplished. Two days later he was at Messina boarding the *Emma.* The anchor was weighed and off hastened the *Emma* to Salerno where it was to be hoped the now invisible Garibaldi might be located. But there was no Dictator at Salerno. He had vanished, and a thousand rumors accounted for him in a thousand places. Dumas shot off fire-works from the deck of the *Emma,* dispatched secretaries right and left on mysterious errands, furnished cakes and ices and champagne of the Folliet-Louis and Greno brands in honor of the invisible but approaching Liberator, and otherwise disturbed the tepid Bourbon adherents. One morning he awoke to find four thousand Bavarians and Croats, mercenaries in the pay of Francis II, drawn up on the shore and twelve cannon pointed directly at the *Emma.* This upset him somewhat but he was so excited that it was a simple matter to imagine himself in the rôle of a commander of a man-of-war. "These men," he declared with a gesture toward the troopers, "were sent here to crush the insurrection, but I shall take good care that they shall stay here

as long as I do, that is, until our men have received notice." Happily, the Bavarians and Croats were there to desert the Bourbon cause. All they wanted was five ducats a man. Nevertheless Dumas departed for Naples during the day and by the twenty-third of August he was back in the beautiful bay, much to the disgust of Admiral Le Barbier de Tinan.

The day before Garibaldi had crossed the Straits of Messina and seized Reggio di Calabria. The Red Shirts were on the mainland with their faces turned toward Naples and before this irresistible advance the Bourbon armies dissipated like rising mists. Dumas, in the bay of Naples, became an unofficial and unauthorized plenipotentiary for the Dictator. He received agents, passed out food and drink, issued proclamations, defied the disturbed French Admiral and anchored within half a pistol shot of the forts. From the deck of the *Emma* he could see the balcony of the royal palace and occasionally he could see Francis II, worried and waiting helplessly on events, come to the window and gaze across the bay. On the night of the twenty-third, Liborio Romano, the most important of the King's ministers and a man who was wavering toward Garibaldi, opened negotiations for a meeting with Dumas. The meeting took place on a British warship and the next day Dumas dispatched a letter to Garibaldi which read in part: "Romano is at your disposition, together with at least two of his fellow-Ministers, at the first attempt at reaction on the King's part. At this first attempt, which will set him free from his oath of fidelity, Liborio Romano offers to leave Naples with two of his colleagues, to present himself to you, to proclaim the deposition of the King and to recognize you as Dictator." Garibaldi read this letter in one of the dirty streets of Soveria and lifted a worried face. What was this fire-eating fellow Dumas about? Garibaldi was eager that any uprising in Naples be retarded until he himself was at the gates of the city ready to assume direction. He feared a resultant anarchy if he were not there and he also feared that Cavour and Victor Emmanuele might seize the power and so bring to an end his Dictatorship and his ambition to invade the Papal States. He sent a message to Liborio Romano with a hint of all this in it.

In the meantime Dumas continued his martial propaganda, welcoming deserters from the Bourbon cause to the *Emma* and other-

wise acting the thorn in the flesh of monarchy. At last Francis II could stand it no longer. He went to the French Ambassador and complained that M. Dumas had hindered General Scotti from bringing supplies to the soldiers, that he had brought about the revolution in Salerno and that he had then come to the port of Naples where he was sowing proclamations through the town, distributing arms and red shirts and making himself generally irritating to the as yet established government. He insisted that M. Dumas be protected no longer by the French flag—was not France neutral in this revolution?—and that he be ordered to leave Naples. The French Ambassador acquiesced and an order was transmitted at once to Dumas declaring that if the *Emma* were not out of the bay in half an hour the forts would open fire on it. Dumas thereupon had his anchor hauled up and proceeded to Castellamare where there were no cannon staring him in the face. There he resumed his propagandist activities, welcomed a committee of action that came aboard to ask his advice as to the propriety of a provisional government and continued to send despatches to the approaching Garibaldi. "Would you wish that all the newspapers, the artists, painters, sculptors and architects should give a shout of joy? Then issue a decree to this effect: 'In the name of the artist community. The explorations at Pompeii shall be resumed and continued if I reach Naples. (Signed) G. Garibaldi, Dictator.'" Dumas had something up his sleeve for himself here. Being driven still further from Naples the *Emma* put in at Picciotta where more red shirts were distributed and an attempt was made to revolutionize the place. Then the vessel proceeded toward Capri and was off that corner of the earth sacred to sirens when a passing steamer hailed Dumas, explaining that Garibaldi had entered Naples to the multitudinous shouts of the populace and that the Dictator desired his unofficial ally by his side. The *Emma* turned her prow toward the city. Garibaldi had entered Naples on September 7th by which date Francis II had fled to Gaeta. The campaign was over.

The question as to exactly what measure of aid Dumas gave to Garibaldi is unanswerable. It is certain that he spent most of his money and gave all of his time over a period of several months and that Garibaldi entertained, for a time at least, a sincere affection for his reckless admirer. Dumas was congenitally incapable of diplomacy

and it is obvious that sometimes he did not comprehend the larger issues in the balance; but he was tireless in action, unselfish (in spite of the ridiculing animadversions in the Paris papers) and inflamed by a real love of liberty. He was inconsistent, but forgivably so; he was vain, but we can smile at his conviction that he had driven Francis II from his throne. His reward from Garibaldi—and it was all that he desired except permission to hunt in the park of Capo di Monte—came on the fourteenth of September when he received a note reading:

Naples, 14 September, 1860.

M. Dumas est autorisé à occuper, d'ici à un an, le petit palais Chiatamone, en sa qualité de directeur des fouilles et musées.

G. Garibaldi.

Splendid! A new career! He would have all the *savants* of Paris down to assist him in digging out the lava-buried treasures of Pompeii. As the story-teller had become revolutionist so would the revolutionist become archaeologist.

Naples, learning that Dumas had been appointed Director of Excavations and Museums, expressed violent disapproval. *Canards* were spread abroad that he was wasting the State money in orgies and that he was supported at the cost of the town. He was grotesque and theatrical, a *fantassin* who had been placed in the seats of the mighty through favoritism. Worst of all, he was a foreigner, and what was the purpose of a revolution if not to conserve Italy for the Italians? Dumas was too immersed in his plans for archaeological discovery to pay heed to or understand the mounting antagonism of the Neapolitans. Maxime du Camp, who had followed Garibaldi in his march across Sicily, found the newly appointed Director in the Palais Chiatamone one day bowed over the plans of Pompeii which were spread out on a long table. Dumas was bubbling with enthusiastic discussion. "You will see what we will discover! At every stroke of the pick we will bring antiquity to light!" He would write to Paris for *savants,* for archaeologists, for artists to aid in the labors, for scholars to classify and number the treasures which would be torn from the jealous earth. He thought only of Pompeii, of the house of Diomedes, of the barrack

of the Veterans. *"Hic jacet felicitas!"* he said to du Camp, repeating the inscription on one of the houses in the buried city. Dumas hoped that Victor Emmanuele would place at his disposition a company of *sapeurs* so that the engaging task might be hastened.

One evening while Dumas was seated at table in the Palais Chiatamone surrounded by his friends, among them Maxime du Camp, a rumor of angry sound, the noise of shouting men, percolated through the windows. Dumas, who had been laughing at one of his own witticisms, paused, lifted his head and listened. "Is there a manifestation this evening? Against what? Against whom? What do they want now? Have they not their *Italia una?"* His friends, who had been forewarned and knew very well what the demonstration was against, moved uneasily in their chairs. The shouting mob came nearer and through the clamor stentorian voices could be heard: "Away with Dumas! To the sea with Dumas!" Maxime du Camp and two colonels who were present hurried to the door of the Palais where they posted themselves. Next door at Castelnuovo a Hungarian company of troopers massed in the first court. The sentinels had been doubled and the captain of this company, actually a general of brigade, waited nonchalantly, his arms crossed, his back against the wall. The undisciplined mob straggled down the road led by a huge fellow in a Chinese hat who waved the Italian flag above his head. There were about three hundred brawlers in this demonstration, all of them shouting "Away with Dumas! *Fuori straniero!* To the sea with Dumas!" The captain advanced slowly. There were a few sharp words from him. The Hungarian troopers fondled the glittering blades of their bayonets. The mob broke into straggling elements that disappeared down side streets. The captain turned to Maxime du Camp, smiled and shrugged his shoulders. It had not taken five minutes to quell the antagonistic manifestation. Maxime du Camp turned back into the Palais Chiatamone with a heavy heart.

Dumas sat bowed by the table with his head between his hands, all the sparkle vanished from his great childish body. When du Camp tapped him lightly on the shoulder he lifted his head and revealed two eyes brimming with tears. He said: "I was accustomed to the ingratitude of France but I did not expect that of Italy." Instead of smiling at the naïve vanity of the speech Maxime du Camp was

profoundly touched. One of the colonels, who had sheathed his sword and returned to the dining room, remarked: "It is the same rabble that existed in the time of Masaniello." Dumas shook his shoulders as if flinging an incubus from him and answered: "The people of Naples are like all other people. To expect a nation not to be ungrateful is the same as expecting wolves to be herbivorous. It is we who are the fools—we who weary ourselves for such creatures." The incident made a painful impression on the mind of Dumas and the efforts of his friends to efface it, a grand dinner, an organized hunt in the park of Capo di Monte, and an excursion to Pompeii, failed to lift his sadness. When Victor Emmanuele made his triumphant entry into Naples Dumas pointed out to Maxime du Camp that the Garibaldians were not represented in the line of parade. Life was like that. He spoke of boarding the *Emma* and going to Tripoli. Then, little by little, his insouciance reassumed its ascendancy and the memory of his misadventure seemed to vanish.

## III

Dumas remained in Naples for four years. In spite of various antagonisms, a thankless populace and financial difficulties, he found the warm life in the south far more charming than an existence in Paris might prove to be. There was his *Mémoires de Garibaldi* to finish, the *Histoire des Bourbons de Naples* to write, and his newly founded journal, the Independent, to conduct. Back in Paris there were still material manifestations of his existence to recall him to that fickle public. Two plays had been produced there during the June that he had been following the fortunes of Garibaldi. *L'Envers d'une Conspiration,* a comedy in five acts, had opened at the Vaudeville on June fourth and on June twelfth *Le Gentilhomme de la Montagne,* dramatized from *El Saltéador,* had been played at the Porte Saint-Martin. Neither production was of any importance. Two episodes marked November, 1860. On the nineteenth a dramatization of *La Dame de Monsoreau,* made with Maquet before the split between the two collaborators, was presented at the Ambigu-Comique with the excellent Mélingue in the rôle of Chicot. It scored a success. And toward the last of the month little Émilie Cordier was hurried back

to Paris for her *accouchement.* That also was successful for it resulted in Micaelle-Clélie-Cecilia, for whom Garibaldi consented to assume the duties of godfather. Dumas, on the first of January, 1861, wrote a letter to the little mother.

Joy and happiness to thee, my dear love of a child, who, for my New Year's gift, has given me the good news that my little Micaelle has come into the world and that her mother is getting on so well.

You know, my dear baby, that I preferred a girl. I will tell you why. I love Alexandre better than Marie. I see Marie only once a year and I can see Alexandre whenever I please. So all the love that I might have had for Marie now falls to the share of my *dear* little Micaelle, whom I see couched beside her tiny mother whom I forbid to get up and go out before I arrive. I hope to arrange everything so that I may be in Paris by the twelfth—it will be impossible for me to get there sooner in spite of my desire.

If I tell you this, my dear love, believe the truth of it: In an hour my heart has grown big enough to make room for this new love.

It is necessary that I leave behind me, as you know, a certain number of articles.

We have founded a committee of elections which I am obliged to attend twice a week from two until five o'clock. I will charge two or three of my colleagues with the care of the journal during my absence. . . .

If, during the next few months, you will not be separated from your child, we will take a little house at Ischia, in the best air and on the prettiest island in all Naples, and then I will come to pass two or three days with you each week all through the spring. In short, rely on me to love both mother and child.

*Au revoir, ma petite chérie;* embrace well for me Donna Micaelle —who is no larger than a thumb, according to Madame de C. . . . I will answer her letter by the next post as well as your mother's, whom I embrace.

*À toi et à l'enfant.* ALEX. D.

To think that I received your letter only today, January first, and that you will not get this, perhaps, before the sixteenth!

*Je t'aime!*

It is possible that Dumas was back in Paris for a brief visit later in the month—he made several flying trips to the French capital during his four years' absence—and it is equally possible that it was upon this trip that he attempted to interest some friends in the establishment of a restaurant in Naples. From Director of Excavations and Museums, a post which seems to have suffered a quiet demise, to the position of host in an eating house was not such a vast jump for a man who regarded food and its preparation as one of the arts. The restaurant, however, never opened and Dumas confined himself, instead, to creating rare dishes in his own kitchen and advising Garibaldi how to conduct his diplomacy. He was a familiar figure in the streets of Naples now and the active hatred against him seems to have mellowed into a contemptuous forbearance on the part of the Neapolitans. They read the views expressed in the Independent and agreed or disagreed according to the color of the political cloaks they wore. Garibaldi grew a little impatient of the flood of suggestions that poured from the willing lips of Dumas, and the intimacy that had been so well established during the period from May to September, 1860, gradually cooled. Dumas continued to labor industriously with his pen, to outline new books for his Paris market, books that were often mere rewritings, translations, or old notes flung together, and Time, once so swift with martial promises, slowed down to a sedentary period. Émilie Cordier, still in her little midshipman outfit, returned to her huge lover and life settled down to an interim that was interrupted by only one incident, an incident as painful to the pride of Dumas as it was amusing to the jealous and malicious observers of his stormy career.

One morning in October, 1862, Dumas noticed in his mail a fat envelope with a London postmark. Opening the sealed coverture and drawing forth the crinkly paper he read the introductory lines: *La Junte gréco-albanaise, sous la présidence de S. A. le prince Georges Castriote Skanderbeg, au très illustre écrivain, Alexandre Dumas.* Skanderbeg! Come, this was of moment. He read further. "The Greco-Albanian Junta believes that you could do for Athens and Constantinople what you have accomplished for Palermo and Naples." The round face of Dumas beamed as he perused the flattering, ora-

torical letter, an epistle calculated with a sly dexterity to catch the vain imagination and melodramatic megalomania of the Frenchman. A cause was being thrust before him, no less than the liberation of Albania and Greece and the destruction of Moslem power in Europe. "Can you remain indifferent to the appeal of the Albanians, to that of Skanderbeg?" Dumas began to see himself as a great liberator, a Garibaldi in his own right, a George Washington. In the back of his own mind he had always been a hero, a militant antagonist of tyranny, a leader of enslaved men, and now the very opportunity to tread nobly across the vast stage of the world was being placed before him. The letter pointed out what the liberation of Albania would mean: the triumph of Christianity in Asia, the union of the Greek and Latin churches, and half a dozen other miraculous changes conducive to the general peace of Europe. It was sublime. This Georges Castriote Skanderbeg, direct descendant of the noble sixteenth century hero whose name was a part of the glories of history, honored the name of his great family. Dumas, flattered into the unreasonableness of making no inquiries as to the source of this call to action, responded with a memorandum outlining a plan of martial and diplomatic development for the Junta. This memorandum—one of those flowery schemes Dumas loved to create—was answered by another letter from London authorizing the friend of Garibaldi to open negotiations with the Italian government, to begin a campaign of publicity and propaganda for the new cause (at his own expense, of course) and to secure permission for the Junta to establish a base of war supplies at Naples. Twice in the letter did the courteous and clever Prince Skanderbeg refer to Dumas as "cher marquis." That was the final touch and Dumas surrendered himself to a cause of which he knew neither the purpose, except vaguely, nor the conspirators. Was there an actual Albanian cause? Was there even a remote possibility of achieving such a cause if it existed? Was there a true Prince Skanderbeg living? Dumas lost his poor sentimental ambitious head and offered the *Emma* and his Italian newspaper to the cause.

Somewhere in London a rascal laughed as he saw what a gullible fish his enticing and romantic bait had caught. The interchange of correspondence continued. "Our secretary" G. Cypre was to be sent to Dumas. Skanderbeg did not want the throne of Greece; let the

King of Italy, Victor Emmanuele, place his own dynasty on the throne. Dumas suggested Prince Napoleon but the idea of a Bonaparte was hastily brushed aside by the canny Albanian Prince. The Junta offered Dumas the post of "général surintendant des dépôts militaires" in the potential revolutionary forces, and when Dumas modestly put the offer aside, the Junta insisted, saying: "You are a poet. In all times the greatest poets have been the greatest warriors." Byron, the great Lord Byron, who died at Missolonghi, was put forward as a model and the flattered old Frenchman, sitting in his disorderly palace in Naples, finally consented to his unexpected honor. One day the official notification arrived. It read:

Scutari d'Albanie, le 2 janvier, 1863

Armée Chrétienne d'Orient
Etat-major général
No. 103
Objet—Nomination au grade de général
Monsieur,

J'ai l'honneur de vous informer que par lettre patente de ce jour S. A. R. monseigneur Skanderbeg vous a nommé au grade de Général Surintendant des dépôts militaires dans l'Armée chrétienne d'orient.

S. E. le Secrétaire au departement de la guerre est charge de l'expedition de votre brevet ainsi que de règlements et ordonnances militaires.

Recevez, Général, l'expression de mon estime.

Le chef de l'État-Major général,
Hugh Forbes,
Lieutenant-général.

"General" Dumas strutted about his study like a big bear that has been fed several handfuls of sugar. He who had been no more than a story-teller laughed at in his own country or a filibusterer scorned by the Neapolitan people was now a Liberator in his own right, a generalissimo in the forces that were about to sweep the hated Turk from the civilized world. He possessed no *dépôts militaires* over which to function and neither did he perceive any army mobilizing to destroy

the Sublime Porte, but all that, no doubt, would materialize in time. Surely a hundred thousand patriots were biding their time, waiting for just such leaders as Prince Skanderbeg and himself. The negotiations continued. Prince Skanderbeg accepted the boat so generously offered by "General" Dumas and forwarded a list of names, men he thought would prove trustworthy in developing the cause. On February eighth the newly appointed *"Général Surintendant des dépôts militaires"* communicated the information that the situation in Italy was dubious, that the antagonistic parties of Bourbon adherents and Massini patriots were the Scylla and Charybdis between which the Junta would have to steer a careful course, and that not a pistol should be sent into Italy without the authorization of the established government. At the same time he gave the prices of the arms that he had purchased at Marseilles for Garibaldi: *revolvers Lefaucheux ou Devesme première qualité, quatre-vingt francs, avec leurs baionnettes; les carabines rayées, avec leurs sabres, quatre-vingt francs.* He also inquired naïvely whether he should arm the *Emma.* Just what port he thought of storming with this eighty-ton vessel is a question; perhaps he intended an onslaught on Constantinople. It is amusing to picture Dumas dashing to and fro in Naples interviewing his friends among the officials about the Greco-Albanian Junta, hurrying to Turin to secure protection privileges for the landing of arms, planning out campaigns on paper, securing the lowest prices for arms and ammunitions, meditating the placing of cannon on the *Emma* (two good-sized guns would have sunk it) and whispering prophecies of earth-shaking battles on the Golden Horn, in Albania and in Greece. One is gratified that no crack-brained inventor ever suggested that he attempt a trip to the moon.

The termination of all this was the appearance of Signor Silvio Spaventa. Signor Silvio Spaventa was the chief of police in Naples, and one of his special duties, apparently, was to keep an eye on this mad Frenchman from whom anything might be expected. He appeared in the residence of "General" Dumas one morning as the bearer of sad information. The Prince of Skanderbeg was a swindler, a *mystificateur,* and the Greco-Albanian Junta was a fake. Dumas, like a great *gosse,* had been taken in by fine language and an impossible proposition. The "General" listened in humiliated dismay to this wrecking of his day-dream and Signor Silvio Spaventa tripped away

with a mocking smile on his lips. It was some time before Dumas recovered from this blow and he was careful to keep the affair as secret as possible from his malevolent and laughing critics in Paris. He rented the *Emma* to an explorer and was glad enough to see it sail out of sight. He returned with a sigh to his reams of paper and quill pens. It was necessary to write if he was to live. Perhaps that was all he was good for, the eternal setting down of word after word on endless sheets of paper for scurrilous publications that postponed payment as long as they could. Goodbye to his dream of a General's career in Greece and Albania and Turkey. He would never ride a caracoling charger through the narrow streets of the city of Constantine. After all, he was sixty-one and that was a rash age at which to consider revolutionizing the world. Skanderbeg! The wretch! He had taken him in with his romantic name. Later he learned that the pseudo Prince was a low intriguer, an *"imbroglione des Pouilles,"* who had been born in Cerignola or Canossa. He never discovered who Lieutenant-General Hugh Forbes was. Perhaps he was some inebriate whose military headquarters were one of the public houses of Soho. Somewhat abashed, Dumas discouraged all conversation about this unfortunate affair and turned to other matters of more immediate interest. There was still the Independent to conduct, plenty of editorials to write outlining the diplomatic policies of Italy, and a new recipe for ravioli to be run down. Life was not as black as it might be even if the secret agents of the government were observing him with an unpleasant fixity and wondering when, if ever, he would remove himself from the fair city of Naples.

Henry Labouchère had an amusing meeting with Dumas during this period. He strolled into a Genoese restaurant for breakfast one morning and the first person he saw was Dumas bowed over a huge omelette. Seated beside the story-teller was a pretty young girl dressed as a Circassian boy, who, of course, turned out to be Émilie Cordier. Dumas welcomed Labouchère expansively and explained that he and Émilie had just landed from a yacht and were spending the day in Genoa. The morning passed to a stream of agreeable conversation and after luncheon Dumas suggested that Labouchère (who was a young and presentable man) accompany them to a show villa in the

neighborhood. Labouchère, as interested in the sparkling eyes of Émilie as he was in the thousand and one tales of Dumas, instantly agreed and they set out for the villa. When they reached the imposing dwelling they were informed that it was not open to the public that day. "Inform your master," said Dumas to the servant, "that Alexandre Dumas is at his door." This speech had the same effect as Ali Baba's "Open, Sesame." A moment later Dumas, Émilie Cordier and Labouchère were in the dining room, a typically Italian domestic scene revealing itself before them. The father and mother of the family were present as well as several well-grown children. Dumas was somewhat taken aback for a minute and then, recovering his aplomb, introduced Émilie Cordier and Henry Labouchère rather vaguely as *"mes enfants."* The three visitors were invited to sit down and partake of coffee and after this refreshment the lovely gardens were exhibited. The Italian owner of the villa and Dumas walked first and behind them wandered Labouchère and Émilie sweetly holding hands to denote their brotherly and sisterly affection. Émilie, who was in a playful mood, whispered to Labouchère that Dumas was very jealous of her, and Labouchère instantly doubled his attentions to his slim little sister. Dumas stumbled about the garden with one wrathful eye turned back on *"mes enfants"* and the other absently taking in the flaming beds of flowers. "What on earth are you doing?" he inquired hollowly when "brother and sister" disappeared behind a rose-bush. Labouchère innocently replied that he was embracing his sister. Dumas restrained a growl of rage and continued to follow his Italian host. Behind him skipped his affectionate children.

The stream of books continued to flow from the pen of Dumas during this residence in Naples. In 1861 there appeared *Bric-à-Brac,* a series of *causeries* rescued from various journals; *Les Garibaldiens: Révolution de Sicile et de Naples,* a compilation of the despatches forwarded to Paris; and *Les Morts vont vite,* memorial articles on old friends. In 1862 *La Boule de Neige* appeared, a Russian tale written in the Caucasus; *Italiens et Flamandes,* a number of historical and biographical sketches; *Trois Maîtres,* a small book containing essays on Michael Angelo, Titian and Raphael; and *Sultanetta,* another Slavic story. In 1863 appeared *Jane,* a volume containing several

sketches besides the title story which seem to come from Russian sources; *Madame de Chamblay,* a novel purportedly based on the career of a vanished friend; *La Princesse Flora,* a translation from Marlinsky; and *La Dame de Volupté,* a work based on the Mémoires de Mlle. de Luynes. It will be observed that none of this work was important. It was hastily conceived material in the form of translations, paraphrases and journalistic *causeries* calculated to fill the columns of periodicals. In other words, it was bread-and-butter work requiring little thought and no revision. Most of it is still readable, and that is the best that can be said of it. The creative vein of Dumas seemed to have spent itself. The great days were over. Dumas was more than sixty years old, and although his large body still retained a perceptible vigor, the brain was slackening.

Time passed and vague thoughts of Paris, that joyous Paris of the Second Empire which had now endured for more than a decade, flitted across his mind like nostalgic birds. On the day before Christmas, 1863, he wrote to Micaelle-Clélie-Cécilia.

> My dear baby,
>
> As thy good grandmother, whom thou must love dearly, as well as thy little mother, writes me that you have need of money, I send thee 150 francs for thy New Year's gift.
>
> I shall try to send thee also a little hamper of good things.
>
> There will be nothing to pay to the messenger who brings it.
>
> I embrace thee very tenderly.—Thy father who loves thee,
>
> ALEX. DUMAS.

Shortly afterward the "dear little mother," Émilie Cordier, vanished from the life of Dumas. She had proved too acquiescent to some Parisian admirer during one of her visits to the French capital, and Dumas, hearing of this sad fall from grace, decided that it would be best to place Émilie among his memories. He would have to do without his little midshipman. The days began to crawl slowly. Garibaldi, tired of unsolicited advice, withdrew from his old filibusterer. After the rift between the Dictator and Victor Emmanuele the Independant continued for some time as an organ of Garibaldian thought, but few people read it. Dumas was wearying of his enterprise. He began to

read about Lord Nelson, Lady Hamilton, and the strange series of events which occurred in Naples in 1798 and 1799, when the Bourbon Ferdinand was overthrown by the French in the former year and was restored to the throne by Cardinal Ruffo in the next. This was a natural thing for Dumas to do for he had already written a history of the Bourbons in Naples for the Independant. The result of this assiduous reading was the beginning of a long *feuilleton* novel called *La San Felice* which he sold to *l'Avenir national* in Paris. One day the officials of Victor Emmanuele came to him with protests about his editorials in the Independant and, disgusted with the whole business and out of sorts with Naples, Dumas threw the periodical to the winds. Let it go. He was tired and depressed. There was nothing left for him in Naples. His militant activities in behalf of Italian unification were forgotten and he was greeted with ridicule wherever he turned. He was just a stout old man with grey hair and a great laugh. But he was still Ulysses in his own mind. It was not too late to seek another and fairer haven, and the sea upon which he would set sail to find that haven would be the sea of Louis-Napoleon, the gay city of Paris. Early in April, 1864, the Parisian journals published a notice reading: *"Nous apprenons que notre illustre romancier, Alexandre Dumas, vient de quitter Naples et sera à Paris dans quelques jours."* Gargantua was returning home.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## THE CHANGED WORLD

### I

THE Paris to which Dumas returned was an accelerated city charged with the electric verve of the Second Empire. The pale-faced Emperor with the dead eyes passed in his rumbling coach on his way to Compiègne, with the beautiful young Spanish woman by his side. In the court of the Tuileries the Prince Imperial rode his pony, Bouton d'Or. The recently completed boulevards flashed with life, and extravagant equipages drawn by prancing horses carried their lovely freight to the Boi. La Comtesse de Castiglione. La Comtesse de Pourtalès. Madame Rimski-Korsakoff. The mysterious Marquise de Païva. It was the era of *bals* and *tableaux vivants* and private theatricals. *Opéra-bouffe* reigned and the melodies of Offenbach and Hervé sounded in the salons and ateliers. It was in vain that Jules Janin thundered in the *Journal des Débats:* "ce perfide Meilhac, ce traitre Halévy, ce miserable Offenbach qui profanent tous les chefs-d'œuvre et tous les souvenirs"; the engaging strains of "La Belle Hélène" drowned his carping voice. The cabarets and *bastringues* echoed to the intoxicating measures of *Pars pour la Crète* and *Bu qui s'avance,* while the insidious hips of Hortense Schneider were the despair of the young dandies at Chez Mabille or the Closerie de Lilas. Everywhere there was dancing. The masked ball at the Opéra was an institution about which fluttered the gay dominos like moths. Then there was the Casino Cadet and the Prado, the Château des Fleurs and the Grande Chaumière, the Salle Valentino and the Bal Bourdon, Des Acacias and the Pré-Catalan, the Alcazar and a dozen and one others, all public dancing places, where a mélange of diverse classes gathered nightly to dance the waltz and the polka and the mazurka and sometimes the

devilish can-can. Plump calves covered with white silk stockings shot into the air above rouged mouths and smiling eyes. There was a mingled scent of musk and violet perfume as the legion of Cythera pushed their way by the tables where champagne corks popped, and the violins squeaked the *Invocation à Venus.*

Far away in barbarous Mexico Maximilien turned his face toward the death that he should meet at Queretaro, and in the stone city of Berlin a stout man with a walrus mustache counted up the cannon of Prussia; but still the dancing went on in Paris, still the carriages slurred their way along the Champs Élysées carrying the laughing courtesans, and still the heavy-lidded Emperor with the waxed imperial drove forth from the Tuileries surrounded by the glittering helmets of his royal guard. In certain quarters there were premonitions of impending political cataclysm. Men met and talked in the charming salon of Madame Adam. Legouvé, Bixio, Garnier-Pagès, Jules Ferry, Pelletan. And sitting in the Café Procope was a warm-blooded Southerner named Léon Gambetta. There were infrequent pauses when the bright sun that shone above Paris in the sixties was chilled by a curious wind from the Rhine and there were ominous twilights when the nocturnal builders of barricades stirred uneasily in their slumbers in the dark alleys and secret cellars. But for the moment all was surface sparkle and unconstrained gaiety, a jovial, licentious whirl of living wherein the bars of morality were let down and which abetted the growth of such personalities as Hortense Schneider, Cora Pearl, Blanche d'Antigny (the original of Émile Zola's Nana), Adèle Courtois (who called herself the Baronne de Steinberg), Constance Resuche, Juliette de la Canbière, Juliette l'Italienne (called *La Barucci*), Anna Deslion, La Berta, Alice Labruyère, Adèle Rémy, Léonide Leblanc, Caroline Hasse, Marguerite Bellanger, and Esther Duparc. It is pertinent to set these names down for through their dominance of the social scene they indicated a decadence that was unmistakable. Even in high society an extreme freedom of deportment had manifested itself, a freedom that sanctioned the appearance of the Comtesse de Castiglione at a *bal* costumed scantily as the Queen of Hearts and the still more daring appearance of Madame Rimsky-Korsakoff at the Tuileries disguised (or rather, undisguised) as Salammbo in a transparent dress slit up both sides.

It was back to this effervescent capital of pleasure that Dumas, pachydermous in appearance and with slowly failing faculties, returned in the early spring of 1864, a spring that developed into a painfully hot May, so oppressive in fact, that exhausted pedestrians suffered severely from it.

Dumas, who possessed no *pied-à-terre* in Paris now, went to the rue de Richelieu, 112, where the editor, Polydore Millaud, had concentered his various publications, including the *Petit Journal* and the *Journal Illustre*. Here he was provisionally housed in quarters on the fifth floor facing the boulevard, and here he insouciantly installed a temperamental cantatrice who called herself Fanny Gordoza and who aspired to the Théâtre-Italien. Fanny possessed a terrifically squalling voice of the coloratura variety, and it was her purpose to provide herself with singing teachers at the expense of Dumas. Alexandre *fils,* who had met his father upon his arrival, gazed at the potential opera diva (she was *"une brune assez appétissante qui avait doublé le cap de la trentaine"*) and sighed. His father would never change. Dumas was all ebulliency. He wanted to promenade the boulevards, to greet old acquaintances, to familiarize himself at once with this new Paris. They would peregrinate the city and discuss life and love and Italian sauces with old friends. *La causerie,* that was what made life worth living. Where was Gautier, the good Théo? In Neuilly? Very well, to Neuilly they would go. Alexandre *fils* protested that it was late, that it would be midnight before they arrived there, that Gautier was aging. Dumas waved him aside. No matter. A gesture conceived was a gesture executed. The Romantics were ageless. To Neuilly they traveled, and Gautier, tucked away in his bed, was awakened out of a deep slumber by the sound of an insistent voice bellowing outside his door. The astonished household was galvanized into immediate activity by this gargantuan apparition who had appeared so unexpectedly in the quiet suburb. He was admitted and until four o'clock in the morning he kept them roaring with laughter at his badinages, tales, and inventions. When the elephantine form barged out of Gautier's door the author of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* stood with aching ribs and exhausted mind and watched him go.

Dumas adjusted himself at once to this new Paris. He traversed the streets and was greeted cordially by acquaintances. "I am never

more popular on the boulevards than when I return from a far-away journey," he announced with a broad smile. There were editors to see, both new and old. There was his romance *La San Felice* to finish for *L'Avenir National*. There were articles for Polydore Millaud's string of journals, and there were theater managers to sound out about prospective plays. If he noticed a lack of enthusiasm in some quarters he gave no sign of it but bolstered up his courage all the more with his own boisterousness. But Paris proved too hot and the exhausted writer bethought himself of the joys of the country. It was all very well to stroll about in the evening when the air was filled with music and the women kicked their heels above their heads in the public *bals*, but to sit in a dusty office all day and write while the perspiration ran down one's bowed back was another matter. Émile de Girardin owned a beautiful little house near Enghien-les-Bains and to that neighborhood Dumas would go. He inquired and within a few days had secured for the summer the Villa Catinat on the Avenue du Lac at Saint-Gratien. Within another few days he was installed there with the warbling Fanny Gordoza, two secretaries and a fresh supply of pens.

Life at the Villa Catinat bore some resemblance to a mad-house. The usual string of parasites fastened upon Dumas and existence was further complicated by the caterwauling of Fanny, the squeakings of numerous musicians and the occasional rows that took place. It was the old tale of Monte Cristo over again but on a decidedly reduced scale. Downstairs the noisy guests wasted the substance of Dumas, and upstairs in a huge billiard room the old writer labored. For his desk he took the billiard table and strewed the green baize with a miscellaneous litter of papers, books and brochures. *La San Felice* swept toward its conclusion and a dramatization of Les Mohicans de Paris followed, since the manager of the Théâtre de la Gaité had demanded a play. From his window Dumas could gaze over the lovely countryside and see the gothic architecture of Émile de Girardin's villa. Near at hand was the handsome residence of the Princesse Mathilde. It was to these two places that Dumas would escape when the stridencies of Fanny and her teachers became unbearable. Fanny was obsessed with an inconsistent lust for musical knowledge, and an unending proces-

sion of *professeurs de piano, maîtres de chants* and *accompagnateurs* pounded, yowled and scraped their way through the Villa Catinat. Dumas bore all this with fortitude. As each intruder made his appearance he asked to see the great man. With that liberality that was his ruin the great man promptly invited the unheard-of musician to dinner. Once gazing about the dinner table at an assembly of *professeurs* whose names he did not know he cried: "I am the prey of music!" They were devouring him. Others were devouring him as well. Grisier, his old fencing teacher, sent an exceedingly small ham with a note that he would follow it for dinner. Dumas forgot the date (perhaps conveniently) and went to hunt at Argenteuil. When Grisier arrived, accompanied by several friends, and found no host to greet him he lost his temper and demanded his ham. His friends penetrated the billiard-room and calmly purloined several books and small objects as souvenirs of the master.

There was, of course, no semblance of order at the Villa Catinat. Fanny was useless as the director of a household and the untidiness of Dumas had increased with the years. Everything was at sixes and sevens, and the frightened domestics ran to and fro like chickens under the loud rages of Fanny. Once she discharged the entire corps—there were three servants—the day before Dumas intended to give a large dinner. With that sanguinity with which he attacked all things the old writer turned himself into a cook, ferreted about the empty cupboards and discovering some rice, some tomatoes and a little butter, concocted a mountainous *riz aux tomates* which he stuffed with the sliced saucisson and ham that one guest had brought. For days after the dozen *invités* talked of nothing but the succulent dish. It is astonishing that Dumas could accomplish any work at all in this eternal hub-bub, yet labor he did and *La San Felice* drew to its conclusion in *l'Avenir National* and the script of *Les Mohicans de Paris* was forwarded to the Gaité. It was a tired old man who appeared before the assembled cast but his eyes still sparkled and his vigor, viewed superficially, seemed unimpaired. It was the Dumas of the thirties and forties, too, who responded directly to the Emperor when a hasty censor arrested the production of *Les Mohicans de Paris*. "Sire," he wrote, "there were in 1830, and there still are today, three men at the head of French literature. These three men are: Victor

Hugo, Lamartine, and myself. Victor Hugo is exiled; Lamartine is ruined. I cannot be exiled like Hugo; nothing in my writings, in my life or in my words lends itself to proscription. But I can be ruined like Lamartine, and, in effect, I am being ruined. I do not know what malevolence animates the censor against me. I have written and published twelve hundred volumes. It is not for me to appreciate their literary value. Translated into all languages they have gone as far as steam can carry them. Though I am the least worthy of the three, these works have made me the most popular in the five parts of the world, perhaps because the first is a thinker, the second is a dreamer, while I am, myself, only a vulgarizer. Of these twelve hundred volumes there is not one that might not be safely placed in the hands of the most republican workman of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine or read by a young girl of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, the most modest of our faubourgs.

"And yet, Sire, to the eyes of the censor I am the most immoral man who ever existed. During the last twelve years the censor has successively halted:

"*Isaac Laquedem,* sold for eighty thousand francs to the *Constitutionnel.*

"*La Tour de Nesle,* after eight hundred performances (the veto has lasted seven years).

"*Angèle,* after three hundred performances (the veto has lasted six years).

"*Antony,* after three hundred and fifty performances (the veto has lasted six years).

"*La Jeunesse de Louis XIV,* which has been played only to foreigners and which was to be played at the Théâtre-Français.

"*La Jeunesse de Louis XV,* received at the same theater.

"Today the censor has arrested *Les Mohicans de Paris,* which was to have been played next Saturday. He will probably halt also, under pretexts more or less specious, *Olympe de Clèves* and *Balsamo,* which I am writing at this moment. I do not complain any more for *Les Mohicans de Paris* than I do for the other dramas; only I would call Your Majesty's attention to the fact that during the six years of the reign of Charles X and during the eighteen years of the reign of Louis-Philippe I have never had a play interdicted or suspended, and

I add, always to Your Majesty alone, that it appears to me unjust to make a single dramatic author lose half a million francs while encouragement and support are extended to so many who do not merit this name.

"I appeal, then, for the first time and probably for the last, to the Prince whose hand I had the honor to shake at Arenenberg, at Ham, and at the Elysée, and who, having found me a devoted adherent on the road to exile and prison, has never found me a place-seeker on that of the Empire."

It was a good letter in spite of the bombast and it had an immediate effect. *Les Mohicans de Paris* was released and produced at the Gaité on August 20, 1864, where it had a fair run and earned thirty thousand francs for the theater. At the placid reception of this hastily carpentered play Dumas must have thought of the uproarious triumphs of *Henri III et sa Cour, Antony, La Tour de Nesle, Richard Darlington, Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle,* and all those happy victories of the past. Back he went to the green-covered billiard table, the noisy musicians and parasites that made up his miniature court. There was still work to be done. None of this work brought in enough money, however. What could an author do who was promiscuous in hospitality and so maltreated by his guests that they, arriving at the station in Enghien from the Villa Catinat, would send back their *cochers* to collect fares from the host? One day Dumas found twenty-five of these *cochers* gathered outside his house, impatiently waiting for their money. Black Gargantua paid and sighed. The saucer of five-franc pieces that he left on a table in the hall for the benefit of borrowing guests (the adjective "borrowing" being purely euphemistic) was empty more often than it was cluttered with coins. The larder grew more and more like the cupboard of Mother Hubbard. The tradesmen grew more vociferous in their demands that unpaid bills be met at once. Now and then a windfall semi-recouped the disordered household. For instance, M. Martinet (was he the M. Martinet of *Le Mousquetaire?*), an impresario who conducted the fortunes of the Fantaisies-Parisiennes on the Boulevard des Italiens, conceived the idea of bringing together an exposition of the paintings of Delacroix, who had died some time before the return of Dumas from Italy, and having the old writer deliver a lecture on the life and works of the artist. Dumas

after some expostulation agreed. He made his appearance before an audience that greeted him with a triple salvo of applause. The feminine element was especially enthusiastic. Talking in that vein of *bonhomie* peculiar to him and interlarding his discussion with all sorts of agreeable anecdotes Dumas discovered himself such a success that he willingly repeated the experiment. These exploits merely tided over an impoverished condition that required some great coup to lift it to a plane of security. Besides Fanny and her singing teachers and the domestics there were two secretaries for whom Dumas must provide. One of them was a prospective author and the other was a parasite who represented himself as a native of Villers-Cotterets. Both had their talons in the helpless author and both kept them there as long as they could with profit to themselves.

The summer drew to an end and with the coming of winter Dumas removed from the Villa Catinat and returned to Paris where he took a furnished apartment at seventy, rue Saint-Lazare. The need of money turned his thoughts to the theater. At the same time he continued his work for the daily press, writing among other things a pendant to *La San Felice* which he called *Les Souvenirs d'une Favorite* and which appeared in *l'Avenir National*. Fanny Gordoza grew more difficult than ever and assumed the rôle of a jealous tigress whenever a woman arrived at the door. With her strong Italian accent she would indicate only too vulgarly the object of the visit—which after all was not *always* the case—and send her away. Her own manners were curious. She would receive visitors, particularly young musicians, while she was in bed or frankly perched upon her chamber-pot. Dumas, himself, became, if possible, more Bohemian than ever. His looseness of living, the unsightly looseness of an old man striving to the last to live like a young buck, increased, and his intimates became more and more questionable. His superstition increased and he experimented with mesmerism and consulted "wise women" about lost articles. Fatter than ever he plodded from café to café and from salon to salon. The salons of this period were many and varied, and first among them was that of the Princesse Mathilde who had been the neighbor of Dumas at Saint-Gratien and who also owned a charming hôtel in the rue de Courcelles. Dumas went often to this gathering-place of the leaders in art and letters and rubbed shoulders with

Nieuwerkerke, Théophile Gautier, Arsène Houssaye, Gavarni, Mérimée, Coppée, Gérome, Maxime du Camp and Amédée Pichot. Through these meetings passed Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, watching, analyzing and taking notes. There was the salon of *"la bonne* Mme. Ancelot" to which, it is to be suspected, Dumas did not go. Another salon—to which, also, we may be sure, Dumas did not go—was that of Mélanie Waldor. She was a phantom out of a forgotten past. Other centers of brilliant assemblages were the homes of the Comtesse Chodsko, Madame La Messine and Madame Adam. The world of journalism was crowded with old and new friends. There were Émile de Girardin, Louis Veuillot, Prévost-Paradol, Roqueplan, Aurélien Scholl, Philibert Audebrand, Villemessant and Henri Rochefort, to name only a few. Most of these men observed Dumas with a sigh. He was old, childlike, vain, disorderly and rapidly succumbing to an obsessive satyriasis. The Goncourt brothers, who saw him at the Princesse Mathilde's, on the first of February, 1865, described him as "a sort of giant, with the hair of a negro turned pepper and salt in color, with the little eye of a hippopotamus, clear and sly; and, in an enormous face, those vague hemispherical traits which the caricaturists give to their drawings of the Man in the Moon. There is about him, I know not what, something of a showman of prodigies and commercial traveler for the *Thousand and One Nights.* His speech is voluble but always without great brilliancy, mordancy or color; it is only facts, curious facts, paradoxical facts, astounding facts, that he draws up in a hoarse voice from the depths of an immense memory. And always, always, always he talks of himself—but with the vanity of a great child. . . . He drinks no wine, takes no coffee, and does not smoke. He is the sober athlete of the *feuilleton.* . . ." It was this figure, then, this dinosaur from the Romantic era, that strove, with a confidence that must have been shaken at bottom, to adjust himself to the Paris of the last years of the Empire, a city full of new voices and figures far removed from the phenomena of Louis-Philippe's day. A new literature was in the ascendant. *Madame Bovary,* written as long before as 1857, was an earnest of it. Dumas had read that book and said, "If this is literature then everything written since 1830 is worthless." Even then the Time Spirit

had moved beyond him, although he was not conscious of the fact. Nor was he conscious of his isolation in 1865, although doubt was already knocking at the door.

## II

One day a friend came to Dumas and told him of a great empty barn of a theater in the rue de Lyons, far away from the concentrated entertainment district where *opéra bouffe* reigned supreme. It rejoiced in the ambitious name of the Grand-Théâtre Parisien, and while it suffered such drawbacks as the rumble of the railway to Vincennes, it would nevertheless seem to be an excellent site for the exploitation of popular drama. The crowded quarter about it was full of *ouvriers.* Why should drama not be brought to their doors? The plan appealed to Dumas but he was so deeply in debt that he did not venture to lease the theater in his own name. He took it in the name of one of his secretaries. A company of actors and actresses was hastily assembled and Dumas selected his *Les Gardes Forestiers,* a dramatization of *Catherine Blum,* which had been produced in Marseilles in 1858, for the inauguration of the new venture. It was a pathetic falling-off from the premières of the great comedies at the Théâtre-Français and it was doomed from the start. The actors were poor; the drama was not calculated to arouse any excitement; the expected audiences never materialized. Over the arches thundered the trains and the walls of the Grand-Théâtre Parisien shook. The summer was extremely hot and the workmen enjoyed the quais along the Seine and the parks, those green lungs of Paris, much more than they did the stifling interior of a dusty playhouse. So, except for the few opening performances when the vast *salle* was fairly well filled, *Les Gardes Forestiers* was played to practically empty benches. A further complication was the secretary in whose name the theater had been leased. He juggled the books and appropriated what few profits there were. In fact he developed into such a prestidigitator that Dumas himself became indebted to him. One day—the circumstances are in doubt—Dumas entrusted him with a fine watch ornamented with rubies which had been given the writer years before by the young Duc d'Orléans. Three or four days passed without the secretary saying

a word about this loan and at length Dumas requested the return of this jeweled time-piece. *"Mon cher,"* he said, "I wish you would return my watch. I need it." "Your watch!" impudently answered the secretary, "You know very well that you gave me that watch as a payment on the debts you owe me!" With a roar of anger Dumas drove the secretary from his presence, and at about the same time the Grand-Théâtre Parisien died a lamentable death. The company, however, hung together for some time and played in several provincial towns, among them Villers-Cotterets and Laon, and Dumas, as an additional advertisement, appeared in the lobby of the theater, much like a silent ballyhoo, in order to draw trade.

It was during this period that the second secretary of the old writer made a sudden and ignominious exit from the rue Saint-Lazare. Benjamin Pifteau—that was the ambitious youth's name—had been seen too often in the boudoir of Fanny Gordoza to suit either Dumas or the young man's suspicious mistress. Benjamin explained that Fanny merely dictated letters to him. Fanny, herself, was becoming unbearable. She stood like a dragon between Dumas and the pleasures that his amoral disposition required. She had even reached the point where she would spy on the old gallant and once, when she opened a door and discovered a young actress perched prettily on the fat knee of Dumas, her rage proved her undoing. Dumas, unable to endure the bickering any longer, went into a heaving fury which was only quieted after he had broken a charming crystal decanter on Fanny's shoulders. He accused her of "playing duets" with her variegated string of musicians. That was the end. Within a few days, Fanny, trunks, bags, coloratura voice and all were on their way to that sunny land of Italy where temperament is appreciated. After her departure a delicious silence settled down on the rue Saint-Lazare.

Toward the beginning of 1866 Dumas removed from the rue Saint-Lazare, the scene of so many pitched battles with Fanny, to the Boulevard Malesherbes, 107, near the Parc Monceau. Here he settled, followed, of course, by his train of women, adventurers and parasites, and arranged about him the various bits of furniture and bric-a-brac that he had stored with his friends in times past. It was to be his last residence in Paris. The flat was on the fourth floor, and the visitor entering the antechamber saw first of all a large canvas by

Delacroix representing a king seated on horseback, counting the dead on a battlefield, a picture that the painter had completed for the famous *bal costumé* of 1832. Dumas would indicate this picture as an allegory of his own life. About a thousand volumes, including inscribed books from George Sand, Hugo and others, composed the modest library. In the dining room was a heterogenous array of Bohemian glass and foreign pottery; and here, too, in a black velvet casket was kept the blood-stained *serviette* that once had covered the face of the duc d'Orléans. The household, generally unpaid, consisted of Vasili, a faithful servant who had followed the fortunes of Dumas before, a cook, a house-maid and an Italian valet who always referred to his master as "Mozieu Doumaze." Dumas continued to lead his disorderly life, hiding his women in closets when Alexandre *fils* made one of his infrequent visits, and striving with less and less vigor to recoup his dissipated fortunes. The old ability for concentrated work was gone, for the pleasures of the flesh had made serious inroads on the vitality of Dumas. The *tableau* that Mathilde Shaw surprised was not an unusual occurrence at the Boulevard Malesherbes, 107. She had knocked at his library door one day and at Dumas's gay *"Entrez, entrez"* had flung it open. There she saw the author of *Monte Cristo,* clad in a red shirt and slouched in a huge chair. Half on his shoulder and half on the back of the chair was a young woman seen from the rear. Another, equally young, reposed on an arm of the chair. And, at his feet, crouched still a third. All of them, as Madame Shaw modestly put it, were *"habillées comme notre mère Ève, avant le péché originel!"* The visitor closed the door quickly . . . *"et je me sauvai."*

To the Boulevard Malesherbes one day came Jules Noriac, editor-in-chief of a small periodical called *Les Nouvelles,* with the suggestion that Dumas might aid both himself and the paper by writing an historical *feuilleton* along the lines of those earlier successes which had conquered Paris in the 1840s. Dumas listened and approved. Although he had no Auguste Maquet by his side to be his faithful Man Friday, he, Père Dumas, was still a creative world in himself. He cast about for a subject and lighted upon the tale of the Comte de Moret, that bastard son of Henri IV who disappeared so mysteriously

in the midst of the battle of Castelnaudary, and set to work upon it. As fast as an instalment was finished he would send it to Noriac, and for a few weeks it seemed as though Dumas had recovered his old ability. But the spurt of inspiration did not last. He could not keep the thread of the narrative; he lazily injected copious extracts from memoirs and historical documents; the readers of *Les Nouvelles* complained; *Le Comte de Moret* came to a disastrous and untimely end. No, he could not work as he had once worked when he sat all day at his desk and wrote page after page of living prose. It was all gone. But he still persisted in his endeavors. There was the idea for a play dredged from *Joseph Balsamo.* He planned a scenario but could go no further. He returned to a scenario for a drama brought to him by Amédée de Jallais, and managed, in collaboration, of course, to turn out *Gabriel Lambert,* which de Jallais succeeded in selling to the Théâtre de l'Ambigu. On the opening night, March 16, 1866, Dumas strutted about the corridors of the playhouse, announcing, "I am sure of my piece. This evening I will mock the critics." But the critics were antagonistic and *Gabriel Lambert* ran only twenty-three performances. He began to realize that life was treating him shabbily. If he could write nothing except such hack work as *Les Grands Hommes en Robe de Chambre: Henri IV, Louis XIII et Richelieu,* which appeared in this year, he might as well cease altogether. But the will toward exertion and his vanity would not permit this surrender to life. He would fight against this conspiracy of time to destroy him, and as a first blow he issued a prospectus for a new Théâtre-Historique to be raised by subscription. He called to his friends, known and unknown, in France and abroad. Only a few students answered with a few francs. Then he turned to the Emperor for a subsidy. He would take the Théâtre du Prince Impérial, which had failed as a circus, and convert it into a popular theater for the people of the faubourgs. The Emperor preserved a discreet silence. Michel Levy *frères* were about to reduce his credit with them from ten thousand francs a year to four thousand. He could not even meet the daily expenses of his flat. One day a Dominican priest whom he had known in Naples called upon him (happily there were no women present at the time) and suggested that the writer make a donation to his convent. Dumas lifted his eyes to heaven. The cup in which

he placed his daily earnings from hack-work for the periodicals was quite empty. Then he thought. *Le Grand Journal* owed him for a *causerie* on *L'Art d'accomoder la salade*. He wrote out an order for the small amount, gave it to the priest and requested him to call at the office of the periodical to collect the money.

Dumas was like this always. Desirous of money, he let it leak through his fingers. The most mountainous sums vanished like drifts of snow beneath a burning sun. All of this was very well when one's capacity for production was unimpaired, but it was a different situation when the springs of creation had dried up and composition had changed from a furious pleasure to a painful labor. Suddenly the perplexed author fled to Naples. From there he wrote to his daughter, Madame Olinde Petel, who had separated from her husband and now lived in Paris: "Health excellent. Perfectly happy except that I miss you. Tomorrow I go to Florence. I will be in Paris by the fifteenth. Everything goes well. A thousand caresses." When he came back the unpaid bills still cluttered his desk.

It was about this time his daughter came to live with him.

The short campaign of Prussia against Austria which had terminated in the battle of Sadowa during this year aroused all France and particularly Paris to excited comment. The consequences of this war which placed Prussia so prominently before the world were discussed in the cafés and salons with increasing presentiments. Louis-Napoleon, according to certain prophetic voices, should have flung a hundred thousand men across the Rhine for the relief of Austria and so subdued the Prussian Terror. Four years later, after Sedan, the Emperor admitted the justice of these prophetic voices. His non-intervention had opened the way to his own destruction. Dumas, returned from Italy and still struggling with his debts, welcomed this opportunity to leave Paris once more. There was certainly a book in the Prussian situation. In July he departed from the boulevards and traveled to Frankfort, the city he had visited so long before with Gérard de Nerval. Eleven years had passed since *"le bon Gérard"* had shown Théophile Gautier and Maxime du Camp an old apron-string, insisted it was the girdle of Madame de Maintenon, disappeared into the wintry night and been discovered a few days later hanging by his

neck to a window-bar in the filthy alley of the Vieille-Lanterne. The hangman's rope, re-christened by Gérard "the garter of the Queen of Sheba" had been the apron-string. Dumas must have shuddered a little at recalling the suicide of his mad friend. But Frankfort soon shook these melancholy thoughts from him. The city was animated by a martial spirit and over it hovered the formidable personality of Bismarck. Dumas remained for some time studying the secret hostility of the gentler folk of Frankfort toward the aggressive Prussians and gathering information, anecdotes and facts about the campaign. Then he went to Gotha, to Hanover, to Berlin. He visited the battlefields of Langensalza and Sadowa and saw the fatal spots where Austria had crashed to defeat. He was an old man observing the Time-Spirit and meditating upon a new barbarism. When he returned to Paris he brought with him enough material and unpublished documents to form the basis of a romance of contemporary history. This book, which he called *La terreur prussienne,* appeared in the journal, *La Situation,* during 1867. The instinct of prophecy in future political events that he had revealed more than once during his life animated this book. Together with Lamartine, now old, ailing and forgotten by France, and Thiers, already envisaging the débâcle of the Empire, he foresaw the Mailed Fist that was to dominate Europe for forty years to come.

With his return from the Austrian battlefields the larger activities of Dumas ceased altogether. He still promenaded the boulevards and played a part, modest enough, in the journalistic life of the city. In November he founded a small periodical, *Les Nouvelles,* to which he contributed all sorts of *causeries,* including the chapters that made up the *Histoire de mes Bêtes,* but its circulation was limited and it did not pay for itself. His audiences had dwindled quite away. In December he could not meet two bills that aggregated two hundred and twenty francs, and for some months he had failed to furnish the pension he made his sister, Aimée-Alexandrine, now the widow of Victor Letellier and settled in Neuilly. Yet his ardour remained undiminished during this short period before he retired from the world, and he might be seen at the premières of his son's plays, tears streaming down his face while he applauded so loudly that he dis-

concerted the actors. On these occasions he would indicate his son and announce, "He is my best work." Alexandre *fils,* like all reformed *roués,* heartily disapproved of his father living his private life in public and saw as little of Père Dumas as possible. The father realized this and sighed. "We meet only at funerals," he remarked. His former delight in cooking returned and he wrote many *causeries* about fine dishes, hurried to home after home to prepare astonishing *plats,* and indeed, used this talent to open doors that otherwise would be closed to him.

Two of his oldest friends, Méry and that disciple of the Comte d'Orsay, Roger de Beauvoir, had died while he was in Germany, and the rest of the Romantics were either dead or scattered. Alfred de Vigny and Delacroix had died in 1863, and Victor Hugo was an exile on the Isle of Guernsey. Charles Nodier had passed away long before and Maquet continued estranged. One door did open to him about this time and as he passed through it he must have experienced a sudden sweet scent of the past. It was the door of that brave and silent woman, Marie-Catherine Lebay, the mother of Alexandre *fils.* She felt no rancor toward the father of her famous child. The long years had but increased her gentle forbearance and mellowed her instinctive knowledge of man's vagaries. "Age has taught him nothing," she would remark when some new escapade of Dumas would be brought to her notice. Beside her chair she kept the table upon which Dumas had written *Henri III et sa cour,* and in a closet was the torn coat that the playwright had worn on the opening night of *Antony.*

The Paris of 1867, that *annus mirabilis* of the Empire, was the center of civilization. It was the year of the great Exposition and from all parts of the world came kings and rulers, aesthetes and barbarians, dreamers and materialists. It was the last bright flame of the Napoleonic dynasty in France, and Dumas, who had been born beneath the suns of Austerlitz and was to perish with the demolition of the Empire, experienced in himself a last bright flame of life. The Exposition opened on the first of April—a trifle prematurely so far as preparations were concerned—and the old writer must have witnessed that inaugural procession where the Emperor in his redingote and the Spanish queen, the friend of Mérimée, in her *toilette de ville* rode

through the Porte d'Iéna, followed by the Princesse Mathilde, the Prince of Orange, the Prince of Leuchtembourg, the Prince Murat and a hundred other notabilities of the Third Empire. He must have wandered through the vast Exposition grounds, traversed the Galerie des Machines, the Galerie des Matières Premières, the Galerie du Vêtement, the Galerie du Mobilier, the Galerie du Matériel des Arts Libéraux, the Galerie des Beaux Arts, and the Galerie de l'Histoire du Travail. And then there were the cafés and restaurants where he might sample all of the foods of the globe, dining *à la mode anglaise,* devouring caviar and smoked salmon brought to him by Russian waiters in red or blue silk tunics, stuffing himself with macaroni *néapolitain* or ravioli *piémontais* or mortadelle *bolonaise* and washing it down with a frugal glass of the wine of Asti or Orvieto or Marsala, or eating the rich patés from Strasbourg and succulent birds baked in flaky crusts. The amusements must have enticed him. He may be imagined pushing his way into the Théâtre International or the Chinese Theater, or listening to the Tziganes playing their czardas or the Rakoczy March, or watching the Algerian Aissaouas swallow live scorpions, or beaming upon the lithe bayaderes and remarking upon their long eyes streaked with kohl, or wandering through the Inca palace by the Porte d'Anvers or the Hindoo pagoda or the Russian izba or pausing before the Chinese giant and the Tartar dwarfs. Though Ingres died during this mounting flame of life, and a strange madman who had lived with a negress and who was named Charles Baudelaire perished during the height of the excitement, Dumas's intoxication in the contemporary scene did not lessen. On June 20th the Théâtre-Français revived *Hernani* with Mademoiselle Favart as Dona Sol and Maubant as Ruy Gomez, and Dumas might be seen in a prominent box applauding noisily. Dense crowds circled about the theater and stray voices raised the daring cry, *"Vive Hugo!"* A group of young intellectuals (they were Sully Prudhomme, Armand Silvestre, François Coppée, Georges Lafenestre, Léon Valade, Léon Dierx, Jean Aicard, Paul Verlaine, Albert Mérat, Andre Theuriet, Arman Renaud, Louis-Xavier de Ricard, H. Cazalis and Ernest d'Hervilly) despatched an enthusiastic letter to the old exile, who, like Voltaire at Ferney, ruled from Hauteville House on the isle of Guernsey, Dumas, outdoing their gesture, sent an epistle addressed to

"Monsieur Victor Hugo.—Océan." On the first of July there was a fête at the Palais de l'Industrie, and the perturbed rulers concealed the newly acquired information that Maximilien had been shot down at Queretaro. There were processions and elaborate evolutions in honor of visiting royalties. All summer and fall these foreign rulers came and Dumas must have seen more than one of them and thought of *la terreur prussienne*. George I of Greece. The King and the Queen of the Belgians. The Crown Prince of Prussia. The King of Spain. The Czar of Russia. The Sultan Abdul-Aziz. Charles I of Wurtembourg. Ismail Pasha, vice-roy of Egypt. The King and the Queen of Portugal. Charles XV of Sweden. The Emperor of Austria. Queen Sophie of Holland. The trumpets blew on the boulevards; the helmeted guards of Louis-Napoleon deployed; Eugénie lifted her white hand and smiled.

For a time the triumph of this year seemed to lift Dumas once more to the heights of his ancient glory. Various theater-managers ransacking Paris for new dramatic fare to feed the enormous crowds remembered his name and the stout victories he had consolidated at the Théâtre-Français, the Odéon and the Porte-Saint-Martin. Why not revive one of those Romantic triumphs? It would, at least, be a contrast to the reigning *opéra-bouffe* and the monstrous *Féeries* with their legions of spindly legged *femmes suspendues*. To the store-house with trash like *Biche aux Bois* and *Cendrillon*. There were visiting kings in Paris. It was time for masterpieces. So early in October, 1867, the Théâtre Cluny presented *Antony* to the enthusiasm of large audiences and the bewilderment of Dumas. It recalled old days to him too poignantly as he sat in his box and listened to the familiar speeches. Mélanie Waldor. The little Dorval. The handsome Bocage. Alfred de Musset's *"J'étouffe!"* He turned to the companion beside him and murmured that it sounded to him like, *"Lazare, lève-toi!"* A world of dead people surrounded him, and as he walked out of the theater and found four or five hundred people waiting to escort him to his carriage he almost thought that he himself was Lazarus newly arisen from the dead and striding forth again into the land of the living. There were fireworks at the Exposition and he could see the green and golden showers of sparks as the rockets exploded above

the Seine. There was music in the air and for a moment he was young once more. He was going to the Palais-Royal to dine with Marie-Catherine. He would meet the grave face of Alfred de Vigny just around the corner. The Sun-God must be waiting to read his new tragedy. Such verses! But no; he was climbing into the carriage and being driven through Baron Haussmann's Paris. There was Blanche d'Antigny in the closed coach that slurred by. And there was the bald forehead of de Morny, the bastard brother of the Emperor, disappearing into that mysterious house. It was Offenbach they were playing; Berlioz and Rossini were old and dying. And here was the Boulevard Malesherbes, and Vasili waiting to remove his coat and bring the red carpet-slippers.

The experiment of the *reprise* of *Antony* encouraged other theaters to venture revivals of the early plays of Dumas. Arrangements were completed for productions early in the new year, and the old playwright swaggered about Paris with a renewed fervor. To the young actress playing the leading rôle in *Antony* at the Cluny theater he wrote, "With my past and your future all will be restored." And then, in the midst of all this Exposition year splendor and recrudescence of his past self Dumas presented an unannounced and unprogrammed divertissement of his own, a comedy that made him the laughing stock of the boulevards. He fell in love again.

At the Châtelet a spectacular melodrama called *Les Pirates de la Savane* was being played. The high point of the performance was a scene wherein a horse dashed across a scaffolding with a woman lashed to its back. The adventurous Amazon who essayed this dangerous rôle was Ada Isaacs Menken, already a well-known figure in Paris. Robust, generously endowed with seductive curves, large-eyed and more than usually intelligent, Ada's career had been a series of defeats and triumphs, marriages, presumable divorces and hectic love-affairs. She was the uninhibited woman of her day, an instinctive courtesan with a sensitive and poetically endowed mind. To know and understand her is to acquire more than the ordinary knowledge of the passionate vicissitudes incurred by the too-regardless acceptance of life, for Ada was the victim of two perilous monsters,—her beauty and her luxuriant imagination. It is worth while to indicate her curious career. She was probably of Jewish origin though she was

born in Chartrain (now Milneburg) near New Orleans in Louisiana about 1835, the daughter of one James McCord. Although, in after times, she was wont to assert that her true name was Dolores Adios Fuertes it is to be suspected that these romantic cognomens were a figment of her fancy. She was probably plain Adelaide McCord. While no more than a child she appeared in the ballet of the French Opera at New Orleans. Immediately thereafter she became a legend; truth, her own self-dramatization, and, possibly, the dubious concoctions of theatrical managers mingle so bewilderingly as to render it extremely difficult to arrive at the unvarnished facts about her. Threading her astonishing career was that unflagging and undisciplined literary pretentiousness that culminated in the book of verse called *Infelicia,* a pretentiousness that abetted from the mysterious beginning the legend that Ada was an exceptional and precocious linguist, that by the age of twelve she could speak Spanish and French fluently and read Latin and Greek, and that—at about the same age—she had completely translated the Iliad into English. There is nothing unusual in a bright child speaking Spanish and French in a city essentially Spanish and French. If she had been brought up in Bangor, Maine, there would have been something to marvel at, even, possibly, her ability to speak respectable English. Neither is it too remarkable that a studious girl of twelve (which, apparently, she was) should be able to read Latin and Greek, or, at least, stumble through it. The complete translation of the Iliad may be taken as an overstatement; she probably paraphrased Achilles's speech to Agamemnon. What is astonishing and what, perhaps, is inexplicable is the curious juxtaposition of the adolescent scholar and *litterateur* and the passionate beauty and amoral actress. Was the divine afflatus expressing itself in fleshly terms? Her youth was an inconsistent mingling of these antagonistic urges. In Havana she appeared before the dark-eyed Cubans in the Tacon Theater where the precipitate dandies immediately toasted her as the "Queen of the Plaza" in long glasses of golden rum. A little later she made her appearance in Liberty, Texas, as the editor of a small transient newspaper and the bearded and booted Texans must have sighed about her over their burning draughts of whiskey. The husband she acquired at the age of seventeen or

twenty (if she did acquire one, then; most facts are semi-legendary about her) conveniently disappeared and shortly thereafter she became the bride of a Jewish musician named Alexander Isaacs Menken. Alexander lasted long enough to implant in her a militant love of Sion and then faded into the shadows, leaving behind him his heretofore respectable name to achieve an unsavoury notoriety. Ada was much perturbed about the state of the children of Israel during this period of her growth and some of her writings upon the subject won from Lord Rothschild the statement that she was the Deborah of the West. She was but on the threshold of a journalistic career when the stage called to her again and she returned to it, playing in Milman's *Fazio* in New Orleans. She was talentless but so overwhelming was her pulchritude that all her ungainlinesses were forgiven her. New York welcomed her in the Old Bowery Theater. In 1859 she married John C. Heenan, the pugilist popularly known as "the Benicia Boy," but this did not interrupt her dramatic career. Not even John C. Heenan, and he was an excellent fighter, could subvert her ambition. A husband was no more than an episode in her busy life, the whim of a moment, perhaps a weakness of the intellect, that was to be forgiven and forgotten as speedily as possible. There are women like that, who cannot desist from marrying when the day is dreary or the weather is unfavorable. It is a silly habit like ringing somebody else's doorbell and running to achieve a tiny thrill. It was a production of *Macbeth* that fractured Ada's dramatic career. Not even her beauty could save her from the wholesale damning she received. James E. Murdoch, that excellent old actor, viewed her inexpert fumbling of Shakespeare's lines with some trepidation (after all, he loved the Bard of Avon) and urged her toward more sensational efforts. He did not suggest tight-rope walking or lion-taming but put it more tactfully. "Let the audience gaze at you in a dangerous predicament but don't open your mouth except to smile." That was the gist of his advice. Ada understood what he meant. She was a passionate pattern in flesh, a living hieroglyph of Aphrodite. View her, therefore, in Albany where she made her first appearance in that elegant thriller, *Mazeppa, or the Wild Horse of Tartary,* a melodrama

based upon Byron's poem. The climax of this melodrama revealed the wild horse let loose on the steppes with the naked heroine bound to its back. What did the staid Dutch-American families of Albany think of Ada Isaacs Menken as they observed her aggravatingly shapely body clothed (like a snake in its skin) in flesh-colored tights (the *dernier cri* of recklessness in those days) and lashed to a horse that galloped down a rather steep incline? They probably did not attend the play but if they did they slunk into the theater vainly attempting to avoid one another. One Schuyler knocked his head against another Schuyler and both glared. Ada was a complete triumph in *Mazeppa.* But America was rough, its corners were untrimmed, and it was ill-adapted to culture, even the culture of a sensational and practically nude actress; and Ada began to yearn for the more sophisticated cities of Europe. London! Paris! To desire with her was to do and in 1864 (the year that Dumas returned to the French capital) she appeared at Astley's in London and scored a tremendous success. The English city gasped, clapped hands, and vociferated against "the naked drama." Doggerels were printed in the various comical journals.

*Lady Godiva's far outdone,*
*And Peeping Tom's an arrant duffer,*
*Menken outstrips them both in one*
*At Astley's now the Opera Buffer.*

Ada's apartments in the Westminster Hotel became a Mecca for all the ambitious young bucks in the British capital. Flowers. Jewels. Dinner invitations. Discreet intimations not of immortality but of secret intimacies. Ada insouciantly dispossessed herself of a fourth husband (it may have been Orpheus C. Kerr, who had, for once, lost his sense of humor), absent-mindedly acquired a fifth, promptly forgot him, and turned two large and limpid eyes on the London literati. John Brougham brought her a play called *The Children of the Sun.* Every afternoon she drove in a handsome carriage through Regent Street. The literati haunted her doors. Charles Dickens. Charles Reade. Watts Phillips. John Oxenford. Young Algernon Charles

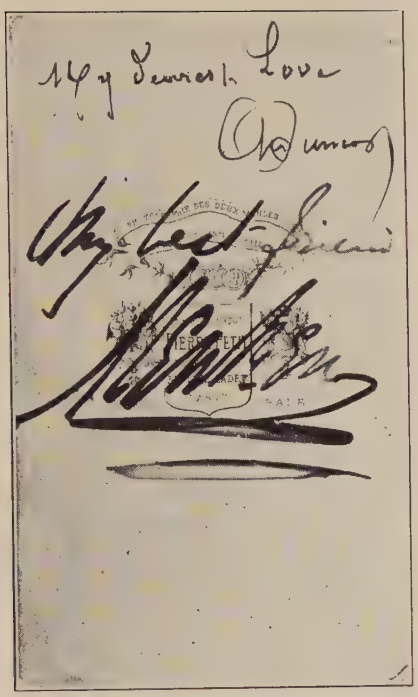
Swinburne. What a feverish and inspired young man he was! He wrote in her album:

*Combien de temps, dis, la belle,*
*Dis, veux-tu, m'etre fidèle?—*
*Pour une nuit, pour un jour,*
*Mon amour.*

*L'amour nous flatte et nous touche*
*Du doigt, de l'oeil, de la bouche,*
*Pour un jour, pour une nuit,*
*Et s'en fuit . . .*

Not even Swinburne, nor Swinburne's amorous-minded secretary, Thompson, who was mad about the actress, could hold Ada in London, however, when Paris, the bright Paris of Offenbach and Hervé and Meilhac and Halévy and Hortense Schneider and Cora Pearl, called; and it was not long before the French capital was as captivated with La Menken as London had been. She was the exact ripe fruit for the carefree boulevardiers of the Second Empire. In her apartment at the Hôtel de Suez, Boulevard de Strasbourg, she held her daily levée and to it crowded all the dandies and voluptuaries of Paris, including the ever-ambitious Théophile Gautier. But one man among all the French haunted her mind,—Alexandre Dumas, the King of Romance. She had often boasted: "When I go to France I will become the mistress of that extraordinary man." The time was now ripe; she was at her zenith; the music of the Exposition was in the air; the soft winds of summer rippled the foliage in the Bois de Boulogne; Paris was a glittering carnival; the sixty-five year old Dumas, still agitated by the leaping flame of the season, was ready and willing.

Ada observed her hero, very much like a good-natured dressed-up hippopotamus in his stiff white piqué vest and high collar, standing in the coulisses one evening and benignantly watching the progress of *Les Pirates de la Savane.* One glance was enough. The young actress, still in her flesh-colored tights, marched up to Dumas, flung her beautiful arms about his plump neck, and violently embraced him. The pleased old man beamed, waxed intimate, and followed up the



LA MENKEN AND THE INCREDIBLE MARQUIS

*Ada leaning lovingly on his shoulder and Dumas beaming like a satisfied old satyr*

DUMAS IN THE SIXTIES

*He grew excessively stout in his latter years*

frank advance as he always followed up such advances, with a late supper and a more or less discreet disappearance *à deux*. That night the dandies and voluptuaries waiting at the Hôtel de Suez with carefully culled bouquets lingered in vain. The affair between Ada and Dumas progressed rapidly. They were eternally in one another's company. He installed her in a new apartment on the proceeds of his revivals. Later he took her to Bougival, a summer-resort on the Seine, and wrote back to his son, the indignant and shocked Alexandre *fils*, that "in his old age he had a Marguerite and was playing Armand Duval." The reference to *La Dame aux Camélias* did not make the younger Dumas feel any better. It was the swan-song of the old man in the rôle of Romeo, but it was a careless and shameless swan-song. He forgot what little reticence he possessed (and that was practically none at all) and permitted photographs of Ada and himself to be taken, Ada leaning lovingly on his shoulder and Dumas beaming like a satisfied old satyr. These pictures must have been Ada's idea for had she not been photographed with young Algernon Charles Swinburne holding her hand? The consequences of these pictures were disastrous. The conscienceless photographer anticipated the era of tabloid publications by distributing the idyllic scene right and left, and it was not many days before the show-cases along the boulevards blossomed with them. The laughing Paris of 1867 immediately responded. Eddying groups gathered and giggled. Squibs appeared in the lighter periodicals. A young man named Paul Verlaine was inspired to the following triolet:

*L'Oncle Tom avec Miss Ada,*
*C'est un spectacle dont on rêve.*
*Quel photographe fou souda*
*L'Oncle Tom avec Miss Ada?*
*Ada peut rester à dada,*
*Mais Tom chevauche-t-il sans trêve?*
*L'Oncle Tom avec Miss Ada*
*C'est un spectacle dont on rêve!*

All Paris roared with laughter and when Paris roars with laughter the delightful peals may be heard throughout Europe. The old rascal!

Imagine it at his age! That old negro of a Dumas has done it again! The victim of all this ridicule grew furious, parted angrily once and forever with the surprised and slightly offended Ada, and then instituted suit against the rascally photographer, Liebert; but it is to be suspected (knowing Dumas as well as we do) that his fury was lightened by a certain licentious vanity. After all he *was* sixty-five years old, a respectable if not slightly amazing age for a persistently gay Lothario.

But this was the end. No more *affaires de coeur now*. Time to take in sail, to be an old man at last. *He* was finished. But what of the beautiful Ada who had been the heroine of his swan-song, who had travelled from the dark delta of the Mississippi to the yellow waters of the Seine? What became of her? What becomes of all beautiful and passionate and unreckoning women who insatiably burn the candle of life at both ends? Illness and death. The shadow of them was hovering over her when she met Dumas. One moment, during the febrile triumphs of the Exposition, the world of Paris, a world of light and laughter and song and showers of gold, was at her feet; and the next moment she was dying in the attic of a cheap lodging house in the rue de Bondy opposite the stage-door of the Théâtre Porte-Saint-Martin. This was in August, 1868, less than a year since she had wandered along the little curving paths beside the Seine at Bougival with Dumas. She had contracted a fatal illness that prevented her appearance upon the stage and with her withdrawal from that artificial public life went her subsistence. There was no money, no dandies with costly bouquets, no high-hatted voluptuaries waiting to pay for her dinners, nothing but four grey walls and a bluff *concierge*. The great heart of Paris beat on as it had beat for a thousand years but her own heart faltered. Her beautiful body dwindled and for days she lay upon a narrow bed in a small room and heard the trumpets of Louis-Napoleon and the laughter of young actresses across the street from her. She, herself, was but thirty-three. She died on August 10, 1868, and her body, straight and cold in death, was interred in the strangers' section among the curious tombs of Père la Chaise. Later it was removed to Montparnasse cemetery and there she lies today, her beautiful body crumbled beneath a slab of grey stone with an urn bearing the words, "Thou Knowest."

For Dumas, the tired old man, there were no more laughing *amantes*. The flesh was exhausted from the feverish task of too much living. He would have to feed upon the past now, relishing those departed moments when his unconquerable hunger for women had been triumphantly satisfied. There were many of them. Once he had indecently boasted that he probably possessed five hundred children, but that was undoubtedly the exaggeration of an old man. Still, there had been a multitude of frail and acquiescent women, and as he remembered them at this twilight end of Time, several must have loomed large and beautiful in his thoughts. The fresh girl's body of Adèle Dalvin. The blonde charm of Marie-Catherine Lebay. The thin dark nervous flesh of Mélanie Waldor. The kittenish freedom of the little Dorval. The exquisite generosity of Bell Krebsamer. The tantalizing curves of Ida Ferrier. The boyish abandon of Émilie Cordier. If he associated himself with Baudelaire's Don Juan descending toward the *onde souterraine* he could be very sure that he left no *"grand troupeau de victimes offertes"* who *"derrière lui trainaient un long mugissement."* No, there were but two who had really suffered from his amorous infidelities, Marie-Catherine Lebay and Mélanie Waldor, and both of them had forgotten the pain and forgiven the inconstant lover. So musing and putting behind him forever the feverish interludes of passion, he realized that his life was over, that the swaggering boulevardier had been transformed into an unwieldy old man with dropsical symptoms, and that his last excesses had but hurried his progress toward extinction. There was nothing to do now but expend the fag end of living in an attempt to achieve some measure of material comfort.

## III

The struggle became increasingly difficult. Even the blare and excitement of 1867 and the revival of *Antony* and other plays did not cause a wave of sufficient enthusiasm to carry Père Dumas on its crest to some modest triumph. The exhilaration of Paris had brought him back to life within himself but that was all. No public turned to the aged Romantic and hailed him as a prophet (to whom had he said that years before? a King?) and *Le Mousquetaire* failed, the small

periodical which had succeeded the defunct *Les Nouvelles* and which served him as a mouth-piece for his *causeries*. True to their word various managers produced plays by Dumas early in the new year; *Kean* at the Odéon, *La Jeunesse des Mousquetaires* at the Porte-Saint-Martin, *Le Reine Margot* at the Gaîté, and *Le Mariage sous Louis XV* at the Thèâtre-Français with the exquisite Bressant as de Candale. Although some few students gathered about the doors of the Odéon to bellow *"Vive Ruy Blas!"* and *"Vive Dumas!"* they were only adolescent mimics of the defenders of a cause that long ago had perished. The early plays of Dumas were out of tune with the times; they were like champagne that had been uncorked too long. All the audiences that had wept and shuddered over *Antony* and *Kean* were in the Past. The sophisticated folk of 1868 would have to be thrilled by more contemporary excitations. It is true that the revival of *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle* at the Thèâtre-Français was favorably received but this comedy was independent of the changes of public taste. Mademoiselle Mars had appeared in it and the dark Rachel and the charming Plessy. It stood alone among Dumas's three score of plays. Times had changed and the works of Dumas were *démodé*. Could he guess that Leconte de Lisle would replace Victor Hugo, the Sun-God of 1830, in the Academy? He could do nothing but return sadly to the Boulevard Malesherbes and continue as best he could his feeble struggle against a Time Spirit that was stronger than men. After 1867 and the spring of 1868 he lapsed into a relative obscurity. From being the idol of a nation he dwindled to the old lion of a city quarter. But yes, but yes! M'sieu Dumas lived there . . . at 107 . . . a great laughing man with crinkly grey hair that stood up on his head and flashing eyes above sagging pouches . . . *un gros garçon!*

Certain friends still came to see him, for he remained amusing and boisterous. Nestor Roqueplan, he in whose room—and what impoverished rooms they were!—Dumas had first read *Henri III et sa Cour;* Noël Parfait; Charles Yriarte; "Cham," the caricaturist, and Desbarolles; these men came, and a few others, youngsters who had been in their cradles when Dumas had married. Although there was little money at the Boulevard Malesherbes there was still the old generosity. Madame Olinde Petel, tall, unpleasantly pious at times and darkly

esoteric, watched over the undisciplined household and struggled with importunate tradesmen who insisted that three-year-old bills ought to be paid. Alexandre *fils,* a trifle magistral in manner, appeared but seldom. At public functions and private dinners he apologized for his huge parent. "My father is a great baby of mine—born when I was quite a little child," he would remark, repeating a *mot* he had made many times before. Or, when some one would sympathize with him on the trial of such an unconventional father: "Well, if he does not supply me with a good example, he gives me a good excuse." At one dinner a droll story about a debtor and creditor was related to the enjoyment of all and at its termination some one whispered to the son that Dumas *père* was the hero of the tale. "Monsieur," returned Alexandre *fils,* "He would have put it in his memoirs." He was worried about his father because he loved him and enraged at him because he disapproved of his lack of morals. The Menken episode, for example, was too glaring. Alexandre *fils* had his two daughters, Colette and Jeannine, to think of. Therefore he gave the Boulevard Malesherbes, 107, a wide berth.

Dumas, in shirt-sleeves and carpet-slippers, shuffled to his desk every day and labored painfully. He could still write *causeries* and he indited many of them, *causeries* about all sort of things, from Mademoiselle Mars to the preparation of rare foods. He launched a periodical called *D'Artagnan.* The first issue appeared on February 4, 1868, and it was headed by the picture of a lanky Gascon knight mounted on a skinny steed. It ran for only six months and during that period he reprinted a portion of the *Histoire de mes Bêtes* and gave to the world for the first time some tales and articles by his daughter, Madame Olinde Petel. Her first book had been *Au Lit de Mort,* which one critic had described as *"un mêlange de mysticisme et de sensualité. Il demontre les dangers du vice et l'horreur de l'adultère, de façon à donner envie d'en essayer."* Marie-Alexandre was evidently the daughter of her father. Dumas could still write plays, and in the late spring of 1868 he transformed his romance, *Madame de Chamblay,* into a drama. At the end of the script the wise old man inscribed this sentence: *"Ici finit le plaisir et commence la peine."* He could still write romances. He composed a sequel to *Les Compagnons de Jehu* which he called *Les Blancs et les Bleus.* He could still

speak in public and hold the interest of an audience. He appeared at the Exposition in Havre in 1868 and lectured on his Russian travels, and from that seaport he went to Caen, Dieppe and Rouen where he repeated his *conférences.* But all of these manifestations were the unavailing gestures of a defeated man. It was too late to retrieve his fallen fortunes and the best he could do was to keep a step or two ahead of the bailiff.

*Madame de Chamblay* opened his eyes too widely to his unfortunate predicament for him to entertain high hopes for the future. He had written this play with the Théâtre-Français in mind—had they not revived several of his plays?—but after it was complete he recalled the enmity of Edouard Thierry, the director, and the antagonism of the new school of players there. No, it would never do to risk a flat refusal at the national house of drama. The humiliation would be too great. There was the Gymnase theater, of course, but that was the playhouse where the plays of Alexandre *fils* were produced, and Dumas did not dare to venture into direct competition with his son. Perhaps he knew that his romantic type of play would never stand up beside the "problems" of Alexandre *fils.* That stage-door, then, was closed. There was the Vaudeville Theater but the director of this successful house was the same individual who had directed the Gaîté in 1864 when *Les Mohicans de Paris* was played, and who, since that time, had alienated himself from Dumas. The other theaters presented a modern type of drama that was beyond the skill and the will of the old man, or they resounded to the mellifluous airs of Offenbach and Hervé. Were all doors closed to him, then? How many managers had beseeched him for plays twenty years ago? What had become of the golden seasons when there were four or five of his productions in a single year? Dumas was about to relinquish the struggle when the Porte-Saint-Martin theater, the scene of so many of his ancient triumphs, failed and set at bewildered liberty a group of actors and actresses who promptly formed an independent company. They engaged the Théâtre Ventadour for their activities and came to Dumas (how could the mimes of the Porte-Saint-Martin ever forget their Père Dumas?) for a play. *Madame de Chamblay* was placed. Some hours after the decision was made, two members of the Théâtre-Français committee, Bressant and Lafontaine, appeared at the flat in

the Boulevard Malesherbes and announced that the House of Racine would grant an audition to *Madame de Chamblay*. Dumas merely shook his tousled grey head. *Madame de Chamblay* was presented at the Théâtre Ventadour on June 4, 1868, and closed after eleven performances because of the intense heat in Paris. The city was like a Sahara. It was a severe blow to Dumas and for the first time he openly despaired. What should he do? How would he live? It was at this time that he went to Havre where he commenced his lectures. All that summer he kept away from the city of his defeat. Let them dance to Olivier Metra's *valses* or watch the dancing girls kick above their heads or drain their tiny glasses of absinthe or cheer the wax-faced Emperor as he drove through the Bois or stare at Cora Pearl's prancing white horses or applaud the helmeted dragoons on the Champs de Mars. Beyond the Rhine the Prussian tiger crouched and an era was coming to a disorderly and flamboyant end. Had he not prophesied it?

It was not until October that Dumas, somewhat invigorated by the warm receptions accorded him by the provincials, returned to the Boulevard Malesherbes and the dreary round of hack work. He was more rotund than ever as he painfully climbed the stairs to his quarters and stopped to gaze at Delacroix's picture of King Roderick counting the dead on the field of battle. He shook his head, greeted the faithful Vasili with a laugh, kissed Madame Petel, took off his coat and gilet and went into the study and sat down before his desk. During the month *Madame de Chamblay* was produced again, this time at the Porte-Saint-Martin theater, which had recovered from its recent failure, and, as the weather was cooler and the audiences less difficult to please, scored enough of a success to raise Dumas's spirits. Perhaps, after all, he was not too old to write another play. He would dramatize *Les Blancs et les Bleus*. But if the *reprise* of *Madame de Chamblay* revitalized him during this warm month of October, another occurrence cast him down mightily. Marie-Catherine Lebay died. It was unbelievable! Dumas began to realize that he was outliving himself.

One evening Mathilde Shaw (she who had seen the three naked Eves clustered about the red-shirted Gargantua) called at the Boule-

vard Malesherbes, and receiving no answer to her ring, passed up the stairs to Dumas's study. It had been converted into a bedroom and the old man, suffering from some indisposition that had caused his face to break out in swollen and shiny patches, was lying in the bed. He was peevish and querulous. The servants had deserted him. He did not know where Madame Petel was. He wanted some barley water. Madame Shaw went down to the fireless kitchen and prepared the drink. He went on to inform her that he had received an invitation to attend a reception at some Ambassador's house that evening and meant to go. Would she reach him a shirt from the chest of drawers? The visitor ransacked the chest of drawers and discovered two night-shirts, a pair of flannel drawers and a red tie. It was obvious that Dumas could not go to the Ambassador's function in a night-shirt; neither could he attend dressed in a pair of flannel drawers and a red tie. The days of Romanticism were over. The old man shook his head. "It is monstrous the way they neglect me when I am ill," he murmured. Then he asked Madame Shaw to peer in his writing desk and see if, by any chance, there was any money there. There was not. "Will you loan me just enough to get a dress shirt?" timidly requested the former owner of Monte Cristo and the Théâtre-Historique. Madame Shaw acquiesced and Dumas despatched her to the nearest establishment for the precious garment. But it was after eight o'clock in the evening and most of the shops were closed. It was with some difficulty and after much time had been wasted that the generous woman found a shop where they sold "the Hercules shirt." This garment had its drawbacks for evening wear as it was gaudy, the design being a group of bright red devils leaping about in violently yellow flames. But it was the best Madame Shaw could do and she purchased it and carried it to the Boulevard Malesherbes. Dumas burst into a passion when he saw the shirt. "Can I wear that at the Ambassador's reception?" he roared. His rage collapsed as speedily as it had arisen, however, and with a sigh he said, "Well, it will have to do." Taking the shirt from Madame Shaw he proceeded to his dressing room and draped himself in it. When he returned clad in full evening dress his broad bosom glowed with the prancing devils. Madame Shaw had forgotten to purchase a tie, and Dumas, after another display of vain rage, adjusted the red tie about his throat.

Sulky and silent, the ridiculous old man departed for the Ambassador's reception, leaving an exhausted woman behind him. A few days later he gaily announced to Madame Shaw: "You would hardly believe it but my costume was an immense success. Everyone thought it was an original idea of my own! They all clustered about me and made much of me. I really think I have started a fashion." "What about the red necktie?" inquired Madame Shaw. "O, that was another success," declared Dumas, "they thought I was wearing it in memory of Garibaldi."

This episode occurred in 1868 and it was one of the last public appearances of Dumas. Feverish attacks visited him with increasing violence and he would lie for days with his face to the wall in a dreamy stupor. An unhealthy corpulence became perceptible and whenever he sat down his huge paunch rolled out over his weakening legs. A lethargy crept slowly upon him, and he would forget what he was saying while discussing business. The dramatization of *Les Blancs et les Bleus* was completed after great labor, and placed in rehearsal at the Châtelet Theater. Dumas would fall asleep during the hubbub of the rehearsal. When the drama was produced on March 10, 1869, it was only a quasi-success. The critics, almost to a man antagonistic to Dumas, scored it severely, but the audiences seemed to enjoy it. This was the last production of Dumas, the ending of a dramatic career begun so auspiciously forty years before with *Henri III et sa Cour*. Shortly before the première of *Les Blancs et les Bleus* Lamartine died, and Dumas recovered enough vitality to indite a moving essay on the dead genius who, like himself, had suffered from the forgetfulness of the short-minded public. Sainte-Beuve died in this year, too, but Dumas preserved a discreet silence on the death of the two-faced Senator. During this same year the weary giant managed to write two additional volumes to *Les Blancs et les Bleus*. That was all. The pen fell from his hand and the long labors of Dumas were at an end. During the summer of 1869 Madame Petel became so alarmed at the increasing lethargy of her father that she called in a doctor, and the medical man, Piorry, prescribed what treatment he could. Little could be done, for an incurable senescence was devouring the huge body. When the weather became too hot in Paris Dumas was taken to Roscoff in Brittany and there he seemed to

recover some measure of *esprit.* But back in his quarters in the Boulevard Malesherbes in September, he relapsed into the slow torpor of a broken old man.

The winter passed, grey, windy and icy, and Dumas remained in his room, smashed by illness and misfortune. He neither knew nor cared what was transpiring on the long boulevards. As he could no longer write there was no money for even the barest necessities, and, much against his will, Dumas was compelled at intervals to send his daughter to Alexandre *fils* for a little money. The son, who did not call upon his father and certainly did not realize to what a low estate his father had fallen, would send the money but not without some grumbling. The old man detested calling upon his son for help, and more often than not he would send the porter or the faithful secretary, Victor Leclerc, who worked for no hire, to the pawnbrokers with some trinket, some bit of Bohemian glass, some memento of the past that had been treasured for years. So conditions went from bad to worse until Dumas could no longer conceal from his son the fact that he was practically destitute. Alexandre *fils,* amazed and remorseful, hurried to the Boulevard Malesherbes, saw the mountainous wreck reposing half-asleep before the desk upon which the white sheets of paper were covered by a thin film of dust, and burst into tears. Thereafter there was no lack of food in the apartment. Alexandre *fils* came often and talked much with his father and rejoiced during those occasions, which grew more and more rare, when Dumas would recover a semblance of his old sparkle and discourse of the past. The small study, bereft of so many bright bits of *bric-à-brac* that now adorned various pawnshops, would take on a rosy glow as Dumas recalled the variegated fortunes of his strenuous days. But the weariness that beset him, that had taken the strength out of his legs and the creative spark out of his dying brain, set these moments of happy recollection farther and farther apart. The silences, those harbingers of death, stretched their noiseless and invisible wings in the Boulevard Malesherbes.

His son came in one day and discovered him reading a book. "What are you reading?" he inquired. The old man, lifting his dimmed eyes, replied, *"Les Trois Mousquetaires!* I always promised

myself that I would read it when I grew old and discover if it was worth anything." "Well, what do you think of it?" Dumas raised his head and answered, "It is good." His son left him bowed over the volumes, and when, a few days later, he visited the ailing Gargantua again, he found him still bowed above the slim tomes published by Michel Lévy. "What is it this time?" he asked as he sat down opposite his father. *"Monte Cristo,"* explained Dumas. "Is it good?" "Pooh," replied the father, "it is not so good as *Les Trois Mousquetaires.*" He was troubled about his ended labors, and as he pored through volume after volume of his novels, a doubt of their permanence assailed him. It seemed to him that he had builded his high tower on treacherous sand, and, timidly enough, he sought encouragement from his son who was so brilliant, so profound, so full of the zest of living and so frank in his judgments. Alexandre *fils* reassured him. "Be at peace," he said. "The pillar is well built and the foundations will stand firm." With a child-like naïveté the old man accepted his son's judgment implicitly. If Alexandre said so. . . . He turned back again to the table heaped with books and stretched his lethargic arm toward another novel. The days passed in this twilight state of being, and the air about the exhausted shell of Père Dumas filled with martial specters whose phantom swords gleamed in the poverty-stricken room. Half-dreaming, half-awake, he saw them pass; they lifted hands in iron gauntlets; they laughed the ancient booming Gascon laughter; they rode upon smoking horses; they whispered in the King's cabinet; their red heels pressed the grass at Versailles and Fontainebleau and Blois. He saw them all and recognized them: Captain Roquefinette flourishing his glittering blade and swearing great oaths; d'Artagnan riding the long road to Calais where the Cardinal's spies strove to beat him down; Athos gazing for the last time on Milady's face while the masked executioner tested his axe; Aramis pinching his ear and whispering to Madame de Chevreuse; Porthos sinking beneath the rock at Belle-Isle-en-Mer; Bragelonne mounting the little stairs at Blois and guided by the white hands of Montalais; Mazarin scheming in his study while the young King bites his nails; Louise de la Vallière weeping over the grave of Raoul; the Masque de Fer gazing out of the barred window at the Isle-Sainte-Marguerite; Charles I of England crying "Remember!" as he bowed

his head on the scaffold by Whitehall; the Comte de Monte Cristo dreaming of his revenge in his extravagant mansion in Paris: La Molé kneeling at the feet of Queen Margot while the Queen Mother creeps through the corridors of the Louvre; Henri the Béarnais smiling into the malicious little eyes of Charles IX; Chicot sardonically plying the fat monk, Gorenflot, with wine; the brave Bussy d'Amboise dying for the great eyes of Diane de Monsoreau; Agénor de Mauléon riding forth to battle; Dubois scratching his ape-like face as he prowls about the midnight streets; Cagliostro engineering the affair of the diamond necklace; Marat lifting his yellow face in the club of the Jacobins; Ange Pitou, fresh from Villers-Cotterets, storming the Bastille with the ensanguined proletariat; Philippe de Taverney struggling against his helpless love for Marie Antoinette and, as the Chevalier de Maison-Rouge, flinging himself to death beneath her scaffold; Du Barry riding in the tumbril to the red square while the women hurl insults at her; Van Baerle dividing his affections between Rosa and the black tulips; Isaac Laquedem wandering the highways of the world; the young Jesuit following Olympe de Clèves to Paris; Salvator assuming the kingship of the underworld of the vast city; and Georges Cadoudal struggling against the Directory in the miry roads about Lyons. And these were but a moiety of the host that followed, kings, queens, ministers, soldiers, adventurers, jesters, peasants, revolutionists and Napoleonic maréchaux. Long into the night they passed, and Père Dumas, his great form sprawled upon his bed, heard them go and remembered what Alexandre *fils* had said and was comforted. "The pillar is well built and the foundation will stand firm."

Early in the spring of 1870 a persistent abscess in the mouth troubled Dumas and he was attended by Doctor Declat. Both the doctor and Alexandre *fils* feared the effect of Paris upon him, and agreed that a trip to Southern France, his beloved Midi, might improve his condition. So to the south of France he was taken, but the pilgrimage in search of health was futile, and toward the end of July, shortly after the declaration of war with Prussia, he was returned to the bare quarters in the Boulevard Malesherbes. It was plain his case was hopeless. He was beginning to suffer from softening of the brain; dropsical symptoms manifested themselves; and the possibility of an

apoplectic attack was obvious. He read no more; he spoke seldom; a twilight of the mind settled down upon him; he was passing out of existence with a Napoleonic empire just as he had come into existence with one. In the streets and boulevards excited crowds were shouting, "À Berlin! À Berlin!" but the ears of Dumas were deafened to it. Maréchal Niel's plan to divide the French forces into three armies under MacMahon, Bazaine and Canrobert was scrapped and the Army of the Rhine (bombastic title!) was organized under the direct command of the Emperor. On the twenty-eighth of July Louis-Napoleon left Saint-Cloud for the front, left his palace filled with a sanguine hope. The short and fatal campaign followed. Weissenberg. Worth. Retreat of the French toward Metz. The Spanish woman sitting as firm as a rock on her throne, according to the dying Mérimée. Vionville. Mars-le-Tour. The indecision of Bazaine. The charging cavalry at Rezonville. Favre crying for arms in the faubourgs. Sedan. The cadaverous Mérimée at the door of Thiers's study, begging the statesman to maintain the dynasty. By the third of September the astounded populace of Paris learned that Sedan had been fought and lost and that the German hordes were on their way toward the capital. The Emperor was captured and the Empire was smashed to bits. All the fair and frivolous society dancing to the airs of Offenbach and watching the white horses of Cora Pearl prance along the Champs Élysées was swept away in a moment. Paris became a vast drill-ground. All the theaters were closed; the new Opera was turned into a barracks and muddy boots scraped across the plush carpets; the Cirques Napoléon and de l'Empératrice overflowed with excited Gardes Mobiles. Bewilderment. Rage. Republican furies. The dust of a crumbled throne blown on the winds of passion. In the Hôtel de Ville a temporary Government of the National Defence was established. Along the yellow roads of France the bronzed Uhlans of Bismarck advanced toward the Seine. In the Boulevard Malesherbes an old man, oblivious to the turmoil without, smiled at the wall and murmured about the Romantic triumphs of the 1830s. Were they crying in the streets about *Antony* or *Hernani?* It was a merciful blessing that the *débâcle* of the Second Empire was kept secret to Dumas. Why should they let him know that an era was dying in bloody agony and that he was dying with it and that the last sad

left-overs of the Romantic movement were about to die so soon, Mérimée, for instance, in this same fatal year and Gautier in 1872? Only the Sun-God was left. On the fifth of September Hugo, pale and excited, had purchased his railroad ticket for Paris in the dark Brussels station. There were fifteen years of apotheosis on French soil before him. It was just as well that Dumas was ignorant of all this. The gun-caissons clattered along the boulevards and the fortifications of Paris were garrisoned with anxious troops. Alexandre *fils* decided that it would be unwise to let his father remain in Paris during the imminent siege; so, about the middle of September, the old man, still blissfully unconscious of the falling world about him, was removed to the peaceful town of Puys, near Dieppe, where the younger Dumas, following the enthusiastic recommendation of George Sand, had built a house for himself.

It was quiet at Puys. There were no loud rumors nor distant rumble of cannon nor sharply-barked commands of square-faced officers. The old era was yet to be hustled out of existence there. Dumas was installed in a large room with windows overlooking the sea in his son's house and through the clear panes of glass he could observe the coiling, white-crested ocean that he had gasped to see so many years before when his mind was filled with the rolling couplets of *Christine*. The salubrious air, fresh with stinging salt and brisk winds, aroused him briefly from his torpor; but the elephantine body, gross with flesh and veined with disease, was too far gone on the road to death for anything, even boisterous winds from the grey Atlantic and the cool tang of salt on the dry lips, to matter. The great world turned on its orbit and the mountainous waves rode in toward the white shore with their long murmurs of mystery but Dumas played childish games with his grandchildren, Colette and Jeannine. Sometimes, when the weather was particularly agreeable, he was carried out to that white beach and placed in a large chair where he would remain for several hours. There he would sleep for his spirit was vague and his brain slumbered as deeply as his body. He did not suffer any physical pain but reposed like a great image, a senseless giant. The grey, cold, rainy days of October whirled like a flock of icy harpies over Puys and the enervated bulk of Dumas could no longer be carried down the steps and across the flying sands. From that time on he no longer left his room. He

was shut away from the world and the world was shut away from him. Both had ceased to exist for the other. Alexandre *fils* and Madame Petel became prisoners with their father; they exhausted themselves in caring for him, in dressing and undressing him, in feeding him as one would feed a Gargantuan child, in conversing with him although it was seldom that he said anything or particularly followed what they said; their reward was those moments, infrequent enough, when he aroused himself from his cataleptic condition long enough to speak weakly to them, to beg that the last rites of religion be administered him before it was too late, to weakly press their hands in his great flabby fingers. On the mantel in his room he had placed a twenty-franc piece when he first arrived in Puys and occasionally his blank eyes would fall upon it. Once a faint sparkle came into those eyes; he pointed to the solitary coin and murmured weakly: "It has been fifty years since I came to Paris with a single louis. Why have they accused me of prodigality? I have always kept it, that louis. See, it is there." That was his last *bon mot.* He turned back into the twilight and emerged from it no more. Flurries of snow. Bleak winds. Toward the end of November the intense cold of the northern winter settled down on Puys and the somber landscape outside, bare and leafless, was reflected in the sick-room. Dumas remained in his bed, the heavy blankets huddled about him. He slept day and night. Did he think? Did he dream? Probably not. He was the physiognomy of diseased inertia, the relaxed surrender of organic life and agitated dreams to the cool engulfing wave of nothingness. In the cold darkness between the fourth and the fifth of December an apoplectic seizure destroyed the remnant of his consciousness and his brain became congested. The Abbé Andrieu of the parish of Saint-Jacques at Dieppe was hurriedly summoned and the last sacraments were administered the dying man, who, by the trembling of his eyelids, seemed to acknowledge the sacred ointment. The priest, his hands shaking, his lips muttering the *Misereatur* and the *Indulgentiam,* gave the extreme unction, sweet oil upon the eyes that had gloried in the splendors of the visible world, upon the nostrils that had known the savory odors of rare foods and subtle perfumes of many beautiful women, upon the full lips that had laughed so boisterously, upon the hands that had been restless and fluttering with vanities and furious

in labor, and upon the feet that had traveled through many countries and mounted the lofty stairs of palaces. The drone of Latin filled the death-chamber of the old pagan and no one heard the clatter of the Prussian cavalry in the near distance; for that day a detachment of Bismarck's conquering army had entered Dieppe, their bayonets fixed, their heads upheld and haughty, and their trumpets blowing shrilly. The unconsciousness of Dumas remained undisturbed. He slept. Toward ten o'clock his son bent over him and placed his ear close to the full-lipped mouth. Nothing. Nothing at all.

The sword of d'Artagnan was broken at last; the shoulders of Porthos had been crushed by a weight greater than that of the rock on Belle-Isle-en-Mer.

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FINIS

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